

MERCIER

CHARLOTTE KELLOGG



THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

I-1

MERCIER

**THE FIGHTING CARDINAL
OF BELGIUM**



MERCIER

THE FIGHTING CARDINAL OF BELGIUM

BY
CHARLOTTE KELLOGG

OF THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM

FOREWORD
BY
BRAND WHITLOCK
THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR TO BELGIUM



D. APPLETON AND COMPANY
NEW YORK LONDON

1920

COPYRIGHT, 1920, BY
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

EX

4705

M55K29

By the publishers of *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The Outlook* and *The De-
lineator* permission is granted to use
in this volume some material which has
already appeared in articles in their
magazines.

1927019



FOREWORD

It was the fate of Belgium to be the first and in some ways the most tragic victim of the war, but by that very fact it was her immortal privilege to become the symbol of the great cause for which the war was fought and won. To this compensation, there was added the distinction of having produced two of the great figures that the war gave to history and to mankind. One of these will stand forever as the avatar of honor; the other as the embodiment of the spiritual ideal, and these two, representing the Belgian nation, formed an impregnable bastion of truth and faith, proving the superiority of moral over physical force. A thousand years from now there will be poems and paintings and statues to celebrate Albert, King of the Belgians, and beside him there will be the figure of the great Cardinal who, while his King was fighting along the muddy reaches of the Yser, held aloft in his pious hands the ideal of patriotism and endurance and kept alive the spirit of the nation.

Mrs. Vernon Kellogg is one of those Americans who devoted themselves to the great work of ministering to the needs of the Belgians during that period before America herself entered the war. She had many occasions to see Cardinal Mercier and to estimate the effect of his personality and of his deeds on the people to whom he was a veritable shepherd when they were in danger of being scattered abroad. In her "Life" of him, one obtains a closer and more intimate view of his character and his deeds than one might otherwise have done had she not been moved to write this book. No one is better qualified than she to speak of his courageous work. For a while she lived the life of those whom that work so greatly helped. She knew of its need and was the witness of its efficiency and its moral beauty, and her talent and her devotion combine to give us an inspiring and an ennobling picture of one of the finest figures of our times or of all times.

BRAND WHITLOCK

CONTENTS

I.	THE FIGHTING CARDINAL	1
II.	FROM BOY TO CARDINAL	19
III.	PASTORAL LETTERS TO AN IMPRISONED PEOPLE . .	51
IV.	THE CARDINAL AND ROME IN WAR-TIME . . .	101
V.	THE GOOD SHEPHERD	115
VI.	THE CARDINAL VERSUS THE GOVERNOR GENERAL .	131
VII.	THE CARDINAL AT HOME	164
VIII.	AFTER THE ARMISTICE — THE VISIT TO AMERICA .	175
IX.	TRENCHANT SAYINGS OF THE CARDINAL . . .	198
X.	TEXT OF THE CHRISTMAS PASTORAL, PATRIOTISM AND ENDURANCE	206
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	248



CHAPTER I

THE FIGHTING CARDINAL

“Fourteen years from to-day our King Albert, standing on his throne, will bow his unconquered head before the King of kings.” The voice rang out above the multitude packing the Brussels Cathedral one July day in 1916. “His unconquered head,” — and we who had been waiting since early morning, anxiously, fearfully, to hear the words that would come from the great Cardinal, knew that at that very moment the gray conqueror surrounded the Cathedral. We knew that after two years’ martyrdom of the body of Belgium that conqueror was more than ever confident of breaking her spirit.

We had been standing weary hours, scarcely able to breathe, as increasing thousands forced their way into nave and transepts, the tense silence of our waiting in the solemn half-light beneath the vaulting arches broken only by

the whispered, "Will he come?" "Will they prevent him?" or by the occasional flashing rumor, "Word has been received,—he is still at Malines." And we were asking ourselves, "If he comes, what can he have of hope to say to us in this black hour?" This was the 86th anniversary of Belgium's independence. Would he dare to refer to it? I had come to Brussels some weeks before as a member of the Commission for Relief in Belgium but I had not yet heard the Cardinal speak. I expected some quiet word of comfort. Then, finally at a little after eleven o'clock our waiting had its reward, when the tall, spare figure in the scarlet robe, so much taller than any about him, appeared beneath the velvet-covered daïs of the choir. A deep breath of relief stirred the air; he had succeeded in coming, he was safely there! After the opening ritual of the mass, he left the choir and slowly climbed the narrow stairway to the pulpit. Would he allude to the national holiday? These were his first words:

The Fighting Cardinal

“Beloved brethren, we ought to have met together here to celebrate the 86th anniversary of our national independence.

“Fourteen years from to-day our restored Cathedrals and our rebuilt churches will be thrown widely open; the crowds will surge in; our King Albert, standing upon his throne, will bow his unconquered head before the King of kings; the Queen and the royal princes will surround him; we shall hear again the joyous peal of our bells, and throughout the whole country under the vaulted arches of our churches, Belgians, hand in hand, will renew their vows to their God, their sovereign and their liberty, while the bishops and the priests, interpreters of the soul of the nation, will intone a triumphant *Te Deum* in a common transport of joyous thanksgiving. . . . To-day the hymn of joy dies on our lips. The hour of deliverance approaches, but it has not yet struck. Let us be patient, let us not suffer our courage to waver.”

Thus swiftly he turned our faces from the

darkness of the present to the visioned triumph of the 100th anniversary of the independence of Belgium. Outside the cathedral walls the gray conqueror watched and listened. And even inside with us, we well knew, were his agents. We held our breath and clenched our hands in our struggle not to cry out.

Then, having by the power of his sure faith fixed our eyes on ultimate victory, from his lips, touched with the live coal from the altar, fell the words that restored courage, fortified the will, comforted and exhorted the spirit. He announced that universal brotherhood was dominated by our respect for unconditioned justice, and that once such justice was violated, for the guilty there must be retribution. Public retribution for wrong-doing, he declared, was a virtue. This utterance was like a clearing wind to many a confused mind. He led our thoughts away from massacre and agony to the austere beauty to be found in a just war. He pictured the people rising through it to ideals of justice and honor, the

The Fighting Cardinal

greatness of the nation in her sacrifice. "God reveals Himself," he said, "in these, as in all events, as the Master of the universal conscience." And he ended with an ardent appeal for further austerity in daily living and greater unity and devotion in service. It would be helpful to all nations, of whatever faith, if at repeated intervals they would re-read this July sermon of the Belgian cardinal. *Per crucem ad lucem* — "from the sacrifice flashes forth the light." And how admirably his own life verifies the truth of that title! I looked down the dim nave at the rapt multitude; shoulders had lifted, faces were shining.

From the pulpit the Cardinal came back to the choir, or to the space before it, where a catafalque had been erected in memory of the Belgian soldiers dead in battle. The raised memorial coffin was simply and beautifully draped with the national flag, veiled in crepe, and was guarded by tall candles. Close about it pressed the first men of Brussels, the city dignitaries. The Cardinal took his place on

the choir steps, at the head of the bier, and in a voice freighted with the nation's sorrow, read the prayers for the dead. These had died on the other side of the wall of steel and fire that shut them from their seven million kin. And the living, fighting army, with the King and the Queen, those still were cut off. From our prison we could send not so much as a message or a bandage to them. There was danger even in erecting this symbolic coffin, and in reading before it the prayers for the dead. I looked again on the sea of upturned faces and read the struggle of anguish and heroic resolve.

The prayers were ended. The Cardinal moved slowly past the flickering candles, and turned toward the rear of the Cathedral. Then suddenly we realized that he was going from us, back to Malines, that it was even possible we might never see him again. And with that realization, pent-up tides of emotion swept over all barriers, as in one great cry we called out the forbidden "Vive le Roi!" and "Vive Monseigneur!" Men thrust by me whispering,

The Fighting Cardinal

“What have we done?” “What can we do?”
“After two years, we have necessity to cry out.
We *must* cry out!” The Cardinal went
swiftly forward, turning neither to the right
nor the left. I was following close behind, and
I saw that his cheeks were wet with tears.

Outside, to pass to the Archbishop's palace,
he was obliged to cross the road. And there
those of us who had come by this door were
overwhelmed by the crowd from the main
portal, surging down for a last look at His
Eminence. They had thrown control to the
winds now, and were shouting, arms outthrust,
canes and handkerchiefs waving, as they called
and recalled the dangerous words. The few
Belgian police were swept off their feet. Even
the Germans, though livid with anger, were for
the moment powerless. “Vive le Roi!” “Vive
Monseigneur!” echoed and re-echoed about
beautiful Sainte Gudule, breaking the silence
of two years. It was only after the gate had
closed on the Cardinal that I was able to free
myself.

The world knows the rest. There were other manifestations that day, throughout the city, which had suddenly that morning blossomed into green (the color of hope) ; there were individual arrests and fines, and Brussels herself was made to pay 1,000,000 marks. All of which greatly strengthened the national morale.

It must not be thought that Cardinal Mercier encouraged these outbreaks. Quite the reverse ; his counsel was always toward wisdom and moderation. While never yielding a point in submission, he yet strongly believed in the necessity of maintaining order, and in preserving an attitude of calm and dignity. Always he counselled against the folly of mere bravado. Fearing for the people (not for himself, we well know) he had especially asked them to promise that if he came to Brussels on this day there would be no least demonstration connected with his appearance. Long before, the enemy had taken care to warn him that innocent parties would be made to pay for

The Fighting Cardinal

his behavior, and he tried to make all understand the risks they were taking in acclaiming him. The *Bruxellois* had promised to remain quiet; but his own example steeled their hearts to danger. We have seen how splendidly they broke their promise.

I have seen Cardinal Mercier many times in church and political and social gatherings, and on several occasions in his own archbishop's palace he talked with me freely and generously of his work. But no memory is more vivid than this one of the 1916 service in Sainte Gudule, when in one of the darkest hours of the Occupation he managed to come from Malines to Brussels, and, appearing in person as spiritual chief, caught and lifted and held us by the power of his fearless spirit.

Clearly, here was something that might well shake the confidence of the Invader. But he failed to understand it, or to measure its power. He could not see his flashing bayonets grow dim before the scarlet of a cardinal's robe, nor hear above the roar of his Krupp guns the

rushing of wings, as the souls of millions rose to the call of their leader.

If this war has taught us anything, it has taught us that peoples, tortured through long years, were able to carry on to the day of deliverance, only because of a spiritual energy, born of an unalterable faith in God. Doctor Ducamps, during the war director of public health at Lille, voiced this common conviction when we were talking recently of one aspect of France's problem of reconstruction, that of reclaiming her debilitated children. He said: "I myself have no confession; I may be said to belong to no Church; but I am absolutely convinced of this; if we are to save these children, we must give them religion. All through the four years I saw proved daily just one thing: those who had it came through; those without it were wrecked." Belgium under the Occupation, without Cardinal Mercier, as guide and support, is unthinkable.

It was not often during the long four years that His Eminence could appear at so import-

The Fighting Cardinal

ant a gathering as this July one in the Brussels Cathedral; in fact, he officiated in Sainte Gudule perhaps not more than four or five times. It was entirely contrary to the enemy's isolation policy that any person in the conquered territory should be permitted to move about. The Cardinal was dependent for journeying on his motor, and during at least one brief period, he was not allowed to use it, while he was held practically a prisoner in his archbishop's palace at Malines. But the Germans were playing a dangerous game in touching the personal liberty of a prince of the Catholic church, and they knew it. How much would German Catholics stand for? How far could the occupying powers go without stirring up trouble within their own frontiers?

Moreover, from the outset, the Imperial design was to split Belgium in two and by offering the Flemish, strongly Catholic half, autonomy, to win it. And since the people of this territory were led by the priests, it was manifestly unwise to anger them too deeply

and too frequently by attempts against the liberty of their Primate.

Despite difficulties, he succeeded several times in going to Antwerp and Brussels, and also in visiting Visé, that sad Pompeii of the north, Liège and Namur, and Dinant, Aerschot, Louvain and Termonde, of terrible memories. There were wide areas in the étapes, or zones of direct military preparation, including all of western, and most of eastern Flanders, where not any Belgian of another district, not even the Primate, could set his foot. He was, indeed, even refused permission to go to Ghent, after the death of the bishop of that city, to fulfil the important duty of consecrating the new bishop.

Early in 1916, he announced that it was necessary for him to go to Rome in answer to a call from Pope Benedict for a general conference of representatives of Catholic colleges and universities. One obstacle after another was put in his way, but in the end he won, and permission to travel was granted. On his way, he

The Fighting Cardinal

was acclaimed with loud enthusiasm by both Italians and Swiss, which naturally greatly disturbed the Germans, who already bitterly regretted having allowed him to go,—they would not repeat that mistake. The return journey was beset with difficulties. However, as has been true of other great men, their challenge had a tonic effect. And he brought back from his visit to Rome, as the lenten pastoral of 1916, “My Return from Rome,” so nobly proves, a more unshakable faith in ultimate victory, an increased fervor in his effort to secure it. More ardently than ever, he preached the virtue of patience and the duty of self-sacrifice.

The average teacher and churchman of sixty-three (Cardinal Mercier was born in 1851) probably would have been content to fight his fight from his own study and pulpit. But it was necessary to this zealous shepherd to be in the midst of his flock, and personally to protect and guide them. He called on inner sources of energy, and between sixty-three

and sixty-eight worked with the apparent vigor of a young man. He had a charming way of saying to us, deprecatingly, with an almost boyish smile, when we were talking with him, "Ah, but you must remember I am old. If I were young! . . ." And we smiled back our remonstrance, grateful to him for demonstrating to us, as he did, the possibility of carrying that precious thing we call the spirit of youth with us along the sixty-to-seventy road.

No, Cardinal Mercier, though he is a great thinker and teacher, could not sit in his study at Malines. He resolutely took the road, going from church to church; from *chaumière* to *château*; from prison cell to prison cell. My husband's first meeting with him in 1915, was in Brussels, where he had come to visit one of his priests in prison. Seizing his loyal priests was one of the enemy's indirect ways of striking at him; and their danger and suffering were never out of the Primate's mind. I got my own first direct picture of his priests in trouble in 1916.

The Fighting Cardinal

After a particularly unnerving day at Tournai, where I witnessed the eviction of hundreds of families in preparation for the arrival of fresh enemy forces from Lille, I turned my car, with a longing for relief, toward a quiet little town in the North. And with what heartache, as I remembered that in all that stricken country, I was practically the only woman who could seek such relief! The neutral ministers, the American members of the Relief Commission, and a few physicians and Belgians directing the ravitaillement were allowed motors. Mrs. Whitlock, the wife of the American minister, could, of course, ride in the Legation car, and two Brussels women responsible for vital relief departments had limited district permits,—that was all. And not only was mine practically the only automobile carrying a woman on the road, but I could take no Belgian, besides my chauffeur, with me. I started alone in my car for Hasselt, a place of 17,000 inhabitants near the Dutch border.

The sky was low and gray over the quiet

little town when I began my rounds the next morning. As I turned into a street, I saw crossing it, about three squares beyond me, a strange, silent procession. I hurried ahead, determined to follow at an inconspicuous distance. Clearly, this was not a funeral cortège, though resembling that more than anything else, with its long line of marching people, over fifty on foot, and the black-covered wagons,—I could only guess at the two or three dozen persons inside. In the line there were eleven young women, and I counted four of the Cardinal's priests. But I dared not follow too closely or with a too apparent interest, for the line was flanked and led by bayoneted soldiers. No townspeople came near, nor could one see them peering from the windows. The farther I followed, the more deserted the street, the more terrible and unreal the whole spectacle. The dumb, driven line with the black wagons, spelled terror and death. Presently, I realized that we were approaching the town Tribunal Hall; I was forced to stop be-

The Fighting Cardinal

fore a wired-off, guarded park in front of it. Then suddenly flashed before my mind that early decree: "Trials for espionage shall be held in Hasselt." And I sickened when I remembered what espionage had been made to cover. The line was being led slowly around the square, up the Tribunal steps, and in through the judgment door. I looked across as a young girl was going in; next passed a priest,—had he comforted his people?

Too ill to stand there longer, and with a kind of unreasoned fear at my own heart, I turned away toward the edge of the restricted area, where I came upon a group of women huddled against the corner of a building as if the wind had blown them there. With their black shawls drawn closely about them, they crouched, watching, waiting,—waiting for the sunset, when the gray guards would lead out the line they had driven in that morning,—but not all of that line.

And to-morrow morning they would huddle together again at this corner for just these two

Mercier

glimpses of their loved ones,— their going and returning, if return they might, and always in fear lest they be driven from their corner. Morning after morning the ever-diminishing procession (for each day some did not return), would march from the prison to the courtroom, and in the evening back to the prison. Until its unfortunates had ended their marching in German prisons, or against the wall, or for the lucky few, in at least temporary freedom. And no sooner would this procession end, than another would begin marching. These were the Cardinal's people, these were his priests. It was for them that he fought his great fight.

CHAPTER II

FROM BOY TO CARDINAL

Even in his cradle, the shadow of war fell on Désiré-Joseph Mercier. He was born on November 2, 1851, a few miles south of Brussels, at Braine d'Alleud, on the southern border of that field of glorious and terrible memories, Waterloo. And he was scarcely nineteen when Western Europe staggered under the first thrusts of the Franco-Prussian war.

That his parents lived near a famous battlefield was of little consequence; but that this territory was a kind of borderland between the differing Walloons and Flemings, from whose union modern Belgium was born, was significant. The Fleming-Walloon fusion, as late distressing events have amply shown, has never been complete. Belgium continues her struggle to make it so. That Cardinal Mercier was

Mercier

born in neither an extreme Flemish nor a distant Walloon outpost, but a Walloon near the Flemings, meant that, so far at least as geography could help, he was prepared to take his part in the advance toward national unity.

There was nothing in his birth that promised an unusual career for him. The Merciers were intelligent, industrious and devout people, descended two centuries back from French stock, who had been swift to join in the struggle for Belgian independence. His grandfather had been for many years mayor of Braine. His father, it is reported, had a talent for painting, but since his desire for an artistic career met only family opposition, he turned instead, in the hours not spent in building up a distillery, to the study of literature and mathematics, and to civil engineering. Désiré-Joseph had two uncles in the church; one of his mother's brothers was the Doyon of Virginal and another half-brother, Rev. Adrian Croquet, went in 1859 as a pioneering missionary to the great Northwest. For almost forty years he was in

From Boy to Cardinal

charge of the missions of the Granderonde Reservation in Oregon, in which new land he was commonly known as The Saint of Oregon. The Cardinal resembles this uncle in appearance, as well as in other ways.

Désiré-Joseph was one of seven children, four of them older sisters. The family were living comfortably in a roomy rural château when the father, Pierre-Leon Mercier, died, and the mother, Barthe Charlier Mercier, was left to bring up her brood of seven, alone. The distillery which Pierre-Leon had hoped would always provide a comfortable income, had to be sold, and the family moved from the large house to a smaller, simpler one near the church. We are told of the brave struggle there, and of the economies practiced so that there would be enough money to give Désiré a good education.

The boy Désiré attended the Braine parish school. There his unusual capacities were already apparent, and it was decided that he should go to the seminary at Malines to com-

plete his classical and theological studies. To the average Belgian family, there is no honor so great as to have one of its children join the priesthood, and Désiré's mother in her prayers dedicated him to the church.

He was nineteen when he entered the Seminary, and the war of 1870 had begun. Refugees from the invaded regions were pouring into Belgium; the agony of France filled all men's thoughts. The calm light in which the mind loses itself in the far reaches of speculative philosophy was being constantly shot across by the dark shadows of the tragic history then in the making. Probably, to-day, Cardinal Mercier himself would find it difficult to say just how this war-experience of his youth is written in the record of the past five years. But knowing something of what war has worked in the minds and character of our own young men of nineteen, we can imagine it had no small influence in shaping the thought and purpose of the sensitive, keen-brained young seminarist.

From Boy to Cardinal

He was ordained a priest in April, 1874, after having convinced his superiors of his unusual talents, especially in the field of philosophy; and they arranged for him to go on from Malines to the University of Louvain for advanced work. But though he had been happy in his theological studies, philosophy, as it was taught in both these Belgian educational centers, brought him little satisfaction. The fires of original and stimulating thinking had once burned vigorously at Louvain; but toward the middle of the 19th century there had been conflict with Rome and the flames were almost extinguished; the earlier constructive effort gave way to the formal and lifeless teaching the young Abbé found there.

In 1877, he was called back to Malines Seminary as professor of philosophy, where it was soon evident that he had the gifts of the great teacher. His first interest, however, was not in academic achievement, but in winning young men to dedicate their lives to Christ. His reputation grew swiftly and surely: he had

been professor at Malines only five years when he was appointed to the chair of philosophy in the University of Louvain, a surprising call considering his youth. And there he at once began to modernize antiquated methods of instruction, and to connect them with life as he saw it.

During these years, Leo XIII had been following the young churchman's progress with satisfaction. This brilliant pope had come to Rome at a time of great poverty of thought and constructive policy; at the beginning of his pontificate, the church had fallen about as low as a great society could fall. Keenly alive to this situation, he at once set about injecting new blood into its arteries. He strove to meet not only the needs of the hour, but those of decades hence, so that his great encyclicals of thirty-five years ago read like messages of to-day. His observations on statecraft, for instance, and on such social and economic questions as marriage and labor, are applicable to our present-day problems.

From Boy to Cardinal

He viewed with especial concern the ever-widening breach between religion and science, and in his search for a means of renewing their shattered alliance, he determined to revive the study of scholastic philosophy, and in particular, that of Saint Thomas Aquinas, the Angelic Doctor of the Middle Ages. He was satisfied that a neo-scholastic philosophy would re-discover for people of to-day the first principles of truth, indicating the boundary line between them and error; it would bring intellectual order out of confusion. It would establish the existence of the supreme being, the Creator of the world, and the relation that exists between the Creator and his creatures, between man and his fellow-man.

He was, moreover, convinced that since this philosophy was to be developed in the light of modern scientific achievement, it would furnish a basis for reconciliation between science and religion; it would act as a mediator, and prevent a continuance of the great damage resulting from their divorce. And, at the same

time, such an intellectual awakening would initiate a much-needed reconstruction of social and religious ideals.

Pursuing these convictions, in his epoch-marking encyclical, *Aeterni Patris*, issued at the beginning of his pontificate, he vigorously exhorted all schools to return to the teaching of Thomistic philosophy. But he well knew that schools would undertake the revival with enthusiasm only if an inspired guide were found. Where was he who would lead back over the old way, and point out new beauties and hitherto undiscovered outbranching paths along it?

In 1880, he sent word to Louvain University, that he wished it to create a chair of Thomistic philosophy. The University listened, but did little until it received further word that His Holiness was about to send an Italian prelate to take the chair. That stirred its directors to action, and then some one suggested that the Pope would, if they proposed it, undoubtedly be content to have the young Belgian Abbé

From Boy to Cardinal

Mercier instead of an Italian put in charge of the new department,—as he was. And so in 1882, the Abbé went to Rome to hear from Pope Leo himself, the plan for the new work. Archbishop Hanna of California was there at the time and has told me of the excitement and expectation aroused by that meeting. He had been sent to the American College at Rome to complete his studies in Latin and Greek, and he and his classmates had sat under the Pope and listened as he portrayed, as his mind grasped it, the future and its necessity, and in a voice that stirred them all with its pathos and passionate desire, had often asked, “But where shall the true teacher be found?”

And then one day they were told that he had been found, and they lined up in the customary formal opposite rows to watch the long-hoped-for leader pass through the hall. “I cannot tell you,” the archbishop said, “with what eagerness and curiosity we waited for him. To us he represented the incarnation of the vision of Leo. And now, as I look back across these

thirty years," he smiled, " I especially remember saying to myself, 'how very tall he is, taller than anyone I have ever seen; he has wonderful eyes and a broad forehead.' Yes, to us young chaps, Désiré Mercier was the tall, thin Abbé who would make a concrete reality of Leo XIII's dream of revitalizing and expanding the philosophy of Saint Thomas, of harmonizing it with science, and both with religion." The tall, thin Abbé went back to Louvain as first professor in the new department of Thomistic philosophy. And it has been at Louvain that during twenty-four years his activities as thinker, teacher, and churchman have centered.

To-day, he is more widely known as the intrepid champion, during the war, of the principles of justice and freedom. To some, he is greatest as the saintlike and tender lover of souls; but many of his closest followers still place him highest as the teacher of Louvain, and the creator there, later, of the superior Institute of Philosophy, which he made at the

From Boy to Cardinal

same time an institute for experimental research, particularly in the field of psychology, where he confirmed the Thomistic principles which he assumed as the foundation of his teaching.

It was this separate Institute within the University that Pope Leo, wishing to give further emphasis to the new teaching, had asked to have established in 1888 — just eight years after he had started the work as one branch of the general curriculum — with Professor Mercier as its President. To prevent delay, His Holiness opened the necessary building fund with a personal gift of 150,000 francs. And soon in a pleasant Gothic hall, the master was able to gather his students and organize his departments, which included, running parallel with those grouped under philosophy, such others as physics, chemistry, anatomy, biology, mathematics, and social and political science. He was happy to have graduates of his own to place in charge of the divisions of cosmology, physics, scholastics, and

sociology. The Neo-Scholastic Review was to spread the teaching over the world. Fortunately, we have an eloquent statement, in his own words, of his conception of the necessity and purpose of this new school. In "A Report on the Higher Studies of Philosophy," after reviewing the immense field open to scientific investigation, he says:

"It is imperative, therefore, that in those different domains we should have explorers and masters who, by their own achievements, may vindicate for themselves the right to speak to the scientific world and to be heard by it; *then* we can answer the eternal objection that faith blinds us, that faith and reason are incompatible, better far than by abstract principles, better far than by an appeal to the past: we can answer it by the stubborn evidence of actual and living facts.

"If we must devote ourselves to works of analysis we must remember—experience has only too clearly shown—that analysis left to itself easily gives rise to narrowness of mind,

From Boy to Cardinal

to a sort of instinctive antipathy to all that is beyond observed fact, to positivist tendencies, if not to positivist convictions.

“But science is not an accumulation of facts; it is system embracing facts and their mutual relations.

“The particular sciences do not give us a complete representation of reality. They *abstract*: but the relations which they isolate in thought *lie together in reality*, and are interwoven with one another; and that is why the special sciences demand and give rise to a science of sciences, to a general synthesis, in a word, to Philosophy.

“Sound philosophy sets out from analysis and terminates in synthesis as its natural complement. . . . Philosophy is by definition a knowledge of the totality of things through their highest causes. But is it not evident that before arriving at the highest causes we must pass through those lower ones with which the particular sciences occupy themselves?

“At the present day, when the sciences have

become so vast and numerous, how are we to achieve the double task of keeping *au courant* with them all, and of synthesizing their results? That difficulty is a grave and delicate one.

“Since individual courage feels itself powerless in the presence of the field of observation which goes on widening day by day, association must make up for the insufficiency of the isolated worker; men of analysis and men of synthesis must come together, and form, by their daily intercourse and united action, an atmosphere suited to the harmonious development of science and philosophy alike. Such is the object of the special School of Philosophy which Leo XIII, the illustrious restorer of higher studies, has wished to found in our country and to place under the patronage of St. Thomas of Aquin—that striking incarnation of the spirit of observation united with the spirit of synthesis, that worker of genius who ever deemed it a duty to fertilize Philosophy by Science and to elevate Science simultaneously to the heights of Philosophy.”

From Boy to Cardinal

Thus he determined to give his idea concrete form, to make it visible. He would house philosophy in a local habitation along with science, whose results it was to interpret and synthesize. And with the theology both must support, they were to live together before the world, as a happy, harmonious family.

Before he became President of the Institute of Philosophy, Professor Mercier had already become known on the other side of the Atlantic, and when, in 1886, the Catholic University at Washington was founded, Mgr. Keane, its first rector, earnestly appealed to the Pope to send the renowned Louvain teacher to the chair of philosophy there. But he was not sent. Indeed, the Cardinal has made his first visit to America in this, his sixty-eighth year. How often during the Occupation, we Americans, to whom he always gave such friendly welcome, used to seek to divert his thoughts from the darkness of those prison days by planning this trip to America! And always he joined in our planning with the

quick smile and eager enthusiasm that make talking with him a refreshing experience. No, Leo XIII did not send him to Washington; this far-seeing Pope had his own good reasons for keeping the philosopher at Louvain. It was in this same year, that wishing to honor the distinguished young thinker, he made him a member of his household, conferring on him the title of Monseigneur with the ecclesiastical dignity it carried.

It must not be supposed that Mgr. Mercier was able to pioneer, even to the sense of but giving a broader expression to truths embodied in the teachings of Aristotle and Saint Thomas (Mediaeval Scholasticism had its roots in the ancient schools of Greece), without opposition. We can more easily understand the militant prelate of the past few years if we know of the early struggles of the vigorous, original young teacher to put his convictions into practice. There were those, for example, who demanded that he continue to teach in Latin; though he knew that the only way he could

From Boy to Cardinal

make his ideas potent was by clothing them in the garment of modern French. Doctor Pace, one of America's foremost Catholic intellectuals, told me recently of the delight with which, after years of early study of philosophy in ponderous Latin, he listened to the crystal-line French of Cardinal Mercier's classroom. "His two outstanding qualities as a teacher," he added, "were clarity and earnestness. His whole attitude was calculated to stir enthusiasm."

Besides those who objected to Latin, were others who bitterly opposed the entire plan of experimental research; and still others, who, mocking at any revival of Thomistic philosophy, cried, "What is to result from dragging up the remains of a mediaeval corpse?" Yet the number of his followers increased, as one after another was attracted or disarmed by his intense sincerity and convincing, direct method of elucidating his theories. But despite such evidences of growth and success, or perhaps because of them, opposition was increasingly

bitter, until some believed Mgr. Mercier might be forced to withdraw. In 1896, he went to Rome for counsel, and came back with renewed courage to persevere.

The results of Leo XIII's decision to revive the teaching of Thomistic philosophy have been far-reaching. Saint Thomas is one of the most precise and most lucid among those men who throughout the ages have attempted to fathom the mysteries of the human mind. Henry Adams said of him: "He is the only man who could make a synthesis." Hundreds of students, inspired by the new teaching of his philosophy, have gone from Louvain University to important chairs in the schools of many countries.

The professor was not satisfied to teach and direct in person. He has been indefatigable in promulgating his doctrines in writing. His philosophical treatises have run through several editions in five or six modern languages. Mercier's *Logic*, *Ontology*, *Psychology*, and *General Criteriology*, studied in this order as

From Boy to Cardinal

text-books, in his philosophy course at Louvain, were widely translated. And, naturally, his prominence during the war has increased the number of his readers. His "Origins of Contemporary Psychology" appeared in English at the beginning of 1918. Two large volumes on his modern scholastic philosophy were published in English in 1917, simultaneously in London and St. Louis. Among his more intimate works, (published by the *Action Catholique*, Brussels) are "To my Students," "Pastoral Works, Acts, Letters," in five volumes, appearing from 1906 to the present, and the last published, beautiful "Retreat Preached to Priests," bearing the sub-title "The Inner Life" (1918). He is adding, at present, a volume covering his four years' correspondence with the German occupying government, and other war literature to the already long list of his writings.

It is necessary to the Cardinal to set his thoughts down on paper; he has the habit of writing, though, especially during these later

years, he has sadly lacked the quiet he would like for composition. In "The Inner Life" in apologizing to his priests for diffuseness, he suggests the difficulty of combining administrative and literary work. "There are in this book," he says, "repetitions and prolixity. The excuse is in our working conditions. It is indeed possible to reserve occasionally a few days of solitude in which to elaborate a plan, but the attempt to write it out is continually broken into by the daily affairs of an administration that cannot be idle. It is cut by intervals that are sometimes prolonged, during which the memory of things already said evaporates and concentration of thought is relaxed."

Cardinal Mercier said to me one day after I had looked on the dust and ashes of what had once been the University Library: "That Library was the child of my heart." He might with truth have said this of the university as a whole. Who questions the depth of his affection for it and for the city of his dearest effort,

From Boy to Cardinal

needs but to read what he wrote after its desolation.

It was in Rome, where he was assisting at the election of the present Pope Benedict XV, that the dread tidings reached him. "In that dear city of Louvain," he wrote later in a pastoral to his people, "from which it is impossible for me to detach my memories, one-third of the built-up section is destroyed; the station boulevard is no more; 1074 homes have disappeared; in the city and its suburbs there is a total of 1823 homes burned. The superb collegiate of Saint Pierre will never recover its old splendor, the ancient college of Saint Yves, the school of the Beaux-Arts of the city, the commercial and consular school of the university, the secular halls, our rich library with its collections, its incunabulae, its unedited manuscripts, its gallery of fame, covering the time from its first days, the portraits of rectors and chancellors, of illustrious professors, before whom masters and pupils of to-day were impregnated with noble tradition and inspira-

tion for their work; all this accumulation of treasure, intellectual, historic, artistic, the fruit of five centuries of labor, is blotted out!"

To-day, at sixty-eight, with superb courage, the Cardinal begins the task of reconstruction, though he wrote poignantly in a letter I recently received regarding his approaching visit to America, "A few weeks passed on your soil of great initiatives and powerful achievements, will give back to me, I hold the hope, a little of the vigor of my own youth in an hour when the task seems very heavy to ageing shoulders."

It is true that the professor had been called away from the university, from teaching, to the Primatial See at Malines, eight years before the war began; but Louvain remained the city of his heart. In February, 1906, on the death of Cardinal Goosens of Malines, Pope Pius X astonished many people, even in Belgium, when he appointed Mgr. Mercier, the philosopher-professor, to succeed to this important administrative post. And only a few

From Boy to Cardinal

months later the Primate became a Cardinal, with the title of Saint Peter in Chains, left vacant by the death of the French Cardinal, Perraud. It was not easy to leave the city he loved, the students he loved, the writings he loved. But in his thought he belonged to God; he did not hesitate. And he could carry much with him from Louvain to Malines; his intellectual habits, his beautiful confidence in the intelligence of others, his unshakable belief in the importance of scientific research, continued to be determining influences in the new work.

From the day the Primate entered it, the archbishop's palace at Malines has been the center of a prodigious activity. And from the beginning he has proved himself enlightened and progressive in the handling of the manifold administrative detail of his large diocese, which includes a population of two and half million Catholics and some three thousand priests. He has traveled unwearingly from one boundary of it to another, directing personally his clergy and people. They like to

recall an incident of one of these journeys to Antwerp a few years ago. As the Cardinal's automobile was hurrying forward, he saw ahead a little child crossing the road, and fearing for it, shouted to the chauffeur to swing the car toward a wall alongside. There was a swift turn, he was thrown violently to the ground, and his face to-day bears the scars of his injuries. Whenever any one refers to this incident, he is apt to say, "But how much better it was that this should have happened than that the slightest injury should have befallen the little child."

And while zealously directing the structural growth of his See, the Cardinal has striven continually to develop ever higher spiritual ideals in his clergy and people, as the only lasting foundation of that work. We have but to read the intimate appeal of such work as his recent "The Inner Life" to appreciate how ardently he longs to draw all toward a life consecrated entirely to Christ.

Cardinal Mercier is one of those great men

From Boy to Cardinal

who has time for little people and little things. Certain days of the week are given up entirely to visitors of all classes, who begin to gather in the democratic ante-chamber as early as eight o'clock in the morning to wait their turn, for, whatever their station, they are received in the order of their arrival. These visitors are not only members of his own diocese in difficulty or in need of counsel or cheer, but include men and women from all parts of the world, who carry away from their audiences life memories and inspiration.

While primarily occupied with the administrative and spiritual duties of his sacred charge, the Primate, believing, as he does, that the whole of life's activities is the Church's concern, has given much consideration to the important social questions of the day. He has been especially conspicuous in his fight against alcoholism and prostitution, and other evils that strike at the hearth. He is a great believer in and preacher of fraternity, of the dignity of the poor and our duty to see that they secure

happiness. He is keenly interested in the all-dominating struggle to secure economic justice for the working-man, and in such kindred efforts as those to provide housing for the unemployed, vacation homes for working-women, orphanages for children. And naturally, always, all education is of most vital concern to him; his faith in man's present and future is built on belief in its potency.

He is a distinguished statesman as well as churchman. He has been indefatigable in laboring to secure a more closely united Belgium, and in his championship of the idea of economic development as vital to this union and to her existence. For, he says, it is through extended activity in her own Congo regions, and shoulder to shoulder with other peoples in other countries, that she will become conscious of the importance of national unity and of her true desire for it. He has believed, with others, that Belgium should protect herself by a strong law of military service and by improved modern fortresses — alas, for the time

From Boy to Cardinal

lost between that conviction and its realization! Without question, as leader of the conservative Catholic party, he has remained the most striking figure in the Belgian politics of the past decade.

Almost immediately after his appointment to the primacy, he was made president of the Belgian Royal Academy of Literature and Sciences, and recently, in 1918, it will be remembered, he was further honored when he was elected on the same day with President Wilson, to the French Academy of Moral and Political Sciences.

Mgr. Baudrillart, rector of the Catholic University at Paris, points to the days May 9-11, 1909, the time of the Louvain Jubilee, as probably the culminating point in happiness in the Cardinal's life. Mgr. Baudrillart went, at that time, from Paris to Malines to represent his university at this celebration of its sister university of the 75th anniversary since its restoration by the Belgian bishops. All the universities of the world had been invited to

participate and the French Rector vividly describes in a preface to his volume "*Per Crucem ad Lucem*" the impression the brilliant event made upon him. There he saw the Cardinal, as counsellor to the King, as Primate of the Belgian church, and as greatest power in the university, uniting in himself, in a central knot of union, the most important forces of the realm.

"I see him still," he says, "that Sunday of May 9th, presiding at the unveiling of the statue of Juste Lipse. He was standing in the middle of the platform, taller than all those about him, dominating, impressive through his extreme thinness, his ascetic physiognomy, the fire of his glance. The ministers in grand uniform, the representatives of the universities in gala costume, the city authorities, were all grouped about him. Like a general, he seemed to be passing in review the Catholic forces of the realm.

"During an hour and a half, members of the ancient societies of Louvain (more than a

From Boy to Cardinal

thousand had come) defiled before the stand. Above their heads floated joyously in the sun large and supple banners of silk, of changeable colors, embroidered with coats of arms and symbolic designs, some quite new, some old and venerable, almost all beautiful. The flags were inclined, the music played, hurrahs were shouted from all throats. In all the groups priests, bourgeois, workmen, artists and farmers marched together.

“The following day at the church of Saint Pierre, Cardinal Mercier appeared again surrounded by the apostolic novices, all the Belgian and visiting bishops, followed by ministers, professors, delegates, academicians, magistrates, functionaries and officers of the garrison. And for the men of the church who found themselves there, it was an intimate satisfaction to say to themselves that of all the corps of representative savants, there was not one who did not hold himself honored to count alongside him this prince of the church, who was also a prince of thought.

“ But where the superiority of the Cardinal most shone was in the solemn academic meeting where he retraced the history of the services of the university. When he entered the great hall of the College of the Pope, the youth of the university gave him an enthusiastic ovation. During three hours discourses followed reports. It was two o'clock in the afternoon, and we had been in session since nine. Our stomachs were objecting a little, when it was at last the Cardinal's turn to address us. With the first words, our attention was awakened and captivated. He talked first eloquently of our duty to the state, then of the needs of all souls in all countries at that time.

“ ‘There is behind us, according to Bossuet,’ he said, ‘a continually renewed multitude of humanity, hungry to believe, to see, to comprehend. Without seeing and comprehending, in one word, without certitude, it is impossible to act successfully. From the post in which God placed me, I hear the incessant cries and groanings of this multitude of insatiable souls

From Boy to Cardinal

who are in quest of truth, the bread of life.

“‘Religion and moral nourishment,—but is it possible for Catholics to forget, especially in our days, that they demand the nourishment also of science? Thoughtful believers, you have the noble and proud duty of not detaching yourselves from your times, but of sharing its aspirations and solitudes. You are not to be of those called emigrants to the interior.

“‘Very well, it is the University that will shape you and make you capable of action, for the universities are the lever of the intellectual world. But if she is to maintain her high place as leader, the university must be always on the march, always realizing some new step of progress. A university is a living work. Its evolution must never suffer arrest.’”

The Cardinal then outlined this progress as he saw it, and the future of his dearly-loved Louvain, the most ardent intellectual center of the Catholic Church.

It was in May, 1909, that he witnessed, in this dramatic pageant, the symbol of the suc-

Mercier

cess of his ambition. Five years later the war seemed to have turned victory into defeat. But while at sixty-eight he faces, with all his duties as Primate, those of the task of reconstruction, he must see in the midst of discouragement much that is hopeful. Belgium, through her martyrdom, has won a place in the heart of the world that she never held before; Protestants and Catholic alike have already poured out their sympathy and their gifts to help her to rise from the ashes.

CHAPTER III

PASTORAL LETTERS TO AN IMPRISONED PEOPLE

As Archbishop, Cardinal Mercier, following a long-established custom of the Belgian bishops, addressed a yearly pastoral letter to his people. These letters touched any vital question, social or political, concerning which he felt the church owed a duty of leadership. But primarily, they were messages from the spiritual chief to his flock, intimate and affectionate in their greeting and encouragement, searching in their condemnation, compelling in their exhortation, exalted in their explanation of Catholic doctrine. Indeed, they have more than once been likened to the epistles of the early apostles. Those epistles, the Cardinal had, as a young Seminarist, translated and annotated and committed to memory; not, a friend of his has said, as a duty, but because he loved them.

When the Invader set a wall of death about Belgium, cutting off her millions from the world outside, in swift dramatic recompense, despite all the enemy's power and vigilance, the walls of the diocese of Malines fell, and her bishop became the spiritual spokesman of a shaken world. How fortunate for those who looked to him that the man who possessed great intellectual and spiritual gifts, possessed also the artist's gift of expression! His pages are vivid, abounding in light, precise and keen and powerful, and welded and sustained by passionate feeling. Those who fail to accept his argument are often captivated by the beauty of his style.

Several of the pastorals issued during the war are already familiar to the people of many countries. "Patriotism and Endurance," "Per Crucem ad Lucem," "The Voice of God," "Courage, my Brethren," "The Lesson of Events,"—all of these have become a part of the thought of the world. Interest in their setting in time and space may die; in the cen-

Pastoral Letters

turies to come their exposition of doctrine may find few listeners; but their analyses of such ideals as those of justice, of honor, and of patriotism; of the principle of vicarious suffering, of retribution, and, above all, of the duty and rewarding and redeeming power of charity, must remain for us of universal and immortal significance,—if we can use such large terms in connection with our small and fleeting world. And in all the brilliant series, the first Christmas letter, “Patriotism and Endurance” in the opinion of many, holds first place. It is commonly called the Christmas pastoral, though its opening pages were read in the churches on New Year’s Day.

Because of it, on that first New Year’s Day after the initial terror and agony of the invasion, a Brussels’ journalist was able to write and conceal:

“The good, comforting day! Yes, good, in spite of the mourning that envelopes us; for to-day a voice is heard that proclaims clearly and resolutely, without reticence or hesitation,

our right to life and hope. From the city, half in ruins, where his episcopal palace still holds, His Eminence, the Cardinal, sends to the clergy of his diocese, with the request that it be read in its entirety to the faithful — without omissions or cuts,—whatever the power that might intervene to give contrary orders — a pastoral letter entitled, ‘Patriotism and Endurance.’

“During the reading of this document in the churches, one could hear the flight of a fly. And when the priest reached the avenging conclusion, the emotion was tremendous.

“What vigorous language! And how in reading it, one feels proud to be a Belgian!

“What will they say, our invaders of the moment, whom this indictment must burn as a red-hot iron? The illustrious Primate of Belgium awaits them without fear. Millions of bayonets cannot prevail against this expression of his thought. It is a moving thing to see opening this duel between one man alone, armed simply with the power of right, and one

of the most formidable empires of the world. The act accomplished by Mgr. Mercier was the result of ripe reflection. The letter is printed and was sold secretly in book-shops at the hour when it was being read in the churches. . . . Will they punish?"

It is evident that the Cardinal had not written an academic treatise on the virtues of patriotism and endurance.

After affectionate greetings and a swift allusion to the common sorrow, his first thought is of those "Outside" on the battle-line, who have given, and are giving, their lives for others. King Albert, he sees at the summit of the moral scale. In a voice surcharged with grief, he pictures the desecration and desolation of Belgium, the explanation of which remains the secret of God. But as God punishes man, who has forgotten him, so surely will he heal and save him. With rapid strokes, he develops the idea of patriotism as the highest of Christian virtues, which in its conception implicitly affirms God. "Far down within us

all," he says, "is something deeper than personal interests, than personal kinships, than party feeling, and this is the need to devote ourselves to that more general interest which Rome termed the public thing, *Res publica*. And this profound will within us is patriotism. . . . It is an internal principle of order and amity, an organic bond of the members of a nation. The religion of Christ makes it a positive law. There is no perfect Christian who is not also a perfect patriot. Which of us does not feel that patriotism is a sacred thing, and that a violation of national dignity is in a manner a profanation and a sacrilege?"

From the consideration of patriotism, the pastor turns to the thought of endurance. "Affliction is, in the hand of Divine Omnipotence, a two-edged sword. It wounds the rebellious; it sanctifies him who is willing to endure." But he adds, "I do not require of you to renounce any of your national desires. The authority of the occupying power is no lawful authority. Therefore, in soul and con-

Pastoral Letters

science you owe it neither respect, nor attachment, nor obedience.”

But “let us conduct ourselves with all needful forbearance. Let us not mistake bravado for bravery, nor tumult for courage.” To his priests, he says especially, “I exhort you to persevere in this ministry of peace, which is for you the sanest form of patriotism; to accept with all your hearts the privations you have to endure; to simplify still further if it is possible, your way of life.” And to all he speaks a final word of appeal for greater charity and holy living. The whole epistle is so closely welded and balanced that one hesitates to select or emphasize its parts. In its entirety it stands as one of the most eloquent and irrefutable arraignments of wrong, and one of the most elevated appeals to duty, existing in any language.

The pastoral letters were printed and distributed to the clergy with instructions as to when and how they should be read to the congregations. Along with them through the

years, both before and during the war, there was printed also a succession of other writings, addressed either directly to priests, (such as the letters preaching a Retreat) or allocutions, announcements and the like.

It must be remembered that when the Germans arrived, printing, except by them, or under their supervision, ceased. No newspapers were permitted other than those they owned or subsidized; and 7,000,000 Belgians and 2,500,000 French were thus at once cut off from communication within their territory, and with the outside world, except by underground ways. A certain Dutch newspaper, the *Rotterdamische Courant*, was, it is true, allowed to come in past the electric barrier from Holland, but only because its sympathies were apparently with the Central Powers. On any day when it carried news supposed to be cheering to the Allies, the issue was barred, which was, of course, stupid and futile, since the people, left to their imaginings, were usually much more encouraged by the suppression

than the truth warranted. Besides, they quickly found subterranean ways of discovering why a particular edition had been kept out. One day, when I was lunching near Charleroi, I remarked to my host as we were going toward the table, "You should sit down cheerfully this noon, for the *Rotterdamische* has not appeared." "Would you care to see why?" he questioned quietly, as he drew a sheet of onion-skin paper, closely covered with bright blue ink paragraphs, from his inner coat-pocket.

We can better appreciate what any printed message from the Cardinal meant to the people if we keep always in mind this determination of the Invader to isolate his captives. Of course, the reaction to the isolation policy was swift. Throughout the entire war, nothing so delighted and braced the people as the appearance, from time to time, of the now world-famous tiny newspaper, the clandestine, "*La Libre Belgique*"—"Free Belgium." And nothing more infuriated the Germans than the

persistent victory of this secret press. The continued defeat of his attempt to unearth it, so worried Governor-General von Bissing that it probably helped to kill him; for despite the fact that he had an entire secret service commission constantly on its track, number after number of Free Belgium appeared mysteriously on his desk, and he died without knowing where it came from. The explanation most frequently offered, while I was "Inside" was that the Jesuits were at the bottom of it. It was strongly Catholic in color, and this seemed a picturesque possibility.

Frequently individuals were caught reading or trying to pass it on, and for them the punishment was ruthless. As members of the neutral Relief Commission, we had to be careful to have no connection with it, but we could not help, from time to time, seeing an issue. The day before I was to go "Out," at the end of 1916, Laure, my faithful Belgian maid and friend, brought up from the letter box at the door a handful of farewell notes and cards,

Pastoral Letters

and with them a packet, which, as she passed it to me, loosened, revealing several copies of *Free Belgium*. Laure's face turned suddenly white. I thought she would fall, until I said quickly, "Pull yourself together; get a match! You and I alone have seen these; we'll burn them at once here in the fire-place—no one can possibly know." And while she ran for a match, I glanced hurriedly down the forbidden columns. There I found a heart-breaking appeal to the workmen of the world to rise up against the deportation of Belgian workmen. Poor people! Some one had hoped that I might, despite my agreements, attempt to carry this message across the death barrier. But even had my conscience consented, I should have tried in vain, for neutral though I was, I was searched to the skin at the frontier.

Ever-heartening mystery and concrete and visible expression of an unconquerable faith and hope, was "*Free Belgium*." Its history is so suggestive of the atmosphere in which the

Cardinal's letters appeared, and of the difficulties of their distribution, that I quote a few paragraphs from a fascinating little pamphlet, which, shortly after the armistice, thrilled Belgium with its revelation of the secret of four years. The author, M. Delandsheere, reports the story as it was told for the first time by its hero, M. Eugene Van Doren, who disappeared two and a half years before the close of the war. He had escaped to Holland, it was believed, but with the armistice, Brussels found that he had never left that city, though during the two and one-half years he had not once seen his wife and five children who lived there.

"As I sat down in the midst of the reunited family," the writer says, "Van Doren brought to the table a heavy cement brick, which throughout the war had lain abandoned in a corner of the garden. He cut it in two and took carefully from the inner cavity a coffer holding a sheaf of papers, admirably preserved, and with the writing on the outside perfectly legible, 'Destined for my wife and

children if I am shot.' With this before us, he began:

“ ‘It was at the very beginning of the war, that, thanks to German money, a new journal, the *Bruxellois*, appeared, and that M. Victor Jourdain, chief editor of the *Patriote*, called my attention to the perfidy of its publication, adding, “We cannot tolerate that this sheet shall poison the public mind. Will you undertake to warn our people?” I agreed, and he gave me the material, my first copy. I went directly to one of my friends, the Abbé Demoor, *vicaire* of the church of St. Albert, and there securely hidden, and with the aid only of a very primitive multiplying machine, I printed a certain number of sheets. These we succeeded in distributing, through the scouts. A few days later we had the satisfaction to hear the Germans forbidding all reproduction of writing by any mechanical process whatsoever.

“ ‘The new year arrived, and the clergy read in all their churches the magnificent letter of

HIS Eminence, the Cardinal, entitled, "Patriotism and Endurance." It was decided with M. Jourdain that we would edit this letter and sell it to the public at the actual cost of printing. We made 25,000 copies, rejoicing in advance over the fury that would seize von Bissing. The letter was printed by M. Becquart, of Louvain Street. The Abbé Demoor and I divided the 25,000 copies between us and set about distributing them. But we had disposed of not more than 300 when I found him one evening in a state of consternation. The Germans had descended on the printing room, seized all the copies, and Becquart had escaped by a hair's breadth. It was a bad beginning. But we refused to be discouraged and began the search for another printer; M. Massardo, of the bookshop in the Saint-Hubert Passage, served us this time, furnishing a second 25,000 copies, only a part of which, however, were distributed.

"This propaganda created a sensation. One beautiful day, when I was alone with M.

Pastoral Letters

Jourdain, he asked me if I would dare to risk undertaking a clandestine paper, and suggested the title, "Free Belgium." I went home and at once began to work. . . . Since I was exposed to constant danger, I judged it prudent to take certain precautions. I secured a cane, one end of which I carefully hollowed, so that I could insert my machine copy on silk paper; for I took care to type each manuscript sent to me. With this device, I had the chance, in case of arrest, of giving nothing into the hands of the Germans. In the evening, after having made my packets of papers, I lowered them, with the aid of my wife, down the chimney, and by means of a certain system, let the supporting rope hang so that a policeman's hand could not reach it, in case of search. But one day after I heard the governess of our children discussing certain strange noises she had heard in the chimney, I resolved to avoid it.'"

From this point, the story advances by a series of miraculous escapes, tragically shad-

owed by the capture of certain aids, the foremost among them being Philip Baucq, who was shot on the same morning with Edith Cavell. I stood last November, in front of the flower-smothered graves in which they lay, side by side. But when one fell or disappeared, another carried on. One editor dictated an issue from his prison cell. The defeated Germans carried many things away with them when they marched out of Brussels on November 17, but they left the secret of "La Libre Belgique" behind.

Such was the net of repression and peril which failed to daunt the Cardinal.

At Christmas-time, 1914, "Patriotism and Endurance" was sent to the clergy with instructions that it be read in all the churches the following Sunday. It had been printed by M. Francis Dessain, a distinguished Belgian scholar and graduate of Oxford University, whose brother was Burgomaster of Malines. The Dessains came from a long line of printers. I happened once to be in Malines

Pastoral Letters

when the yearly mass was being celebrated in one of the churches for the Dessain printers, gone to their reward, great-grandfather, grandfather, father. The sons, before the war, had been printers to the Archbishop, so that it was quite natural that they should print the first war pastoral.

In 1916, I saw for the first time at one end of the charming inner court of the Burgomaster's house, the low brick building that harbored the historic press. A shattered façade opposite it recalled those opening days of catastrophe when the Cardinal was still at Rome, and the enemy shells were falling on his church and palace. At the time of my visit, the Burgomaster was a prisoner in Germany (not for printing the first, but a later, letter of His Eminence) and M. Francis Dessain and his sweet-faced sisters showed me through. On my way in, I had passed the gray-helmeted sentry still watching the house from the street, but there were no longer others in the courtyard. Inside the printing rooms was disarray;

heaps of boxes on the floor, piles of papers on the table, bits of red sealing-wax still hanging from the key-holes,—all as the Germans had left it in January, 1914.

From the printing-rooms we recrossed the court, bright with California poppies and snapdragons, to the library of the house, where at two o'clock on the morning of January 2, 1914, Francis Dessain was arrested for printing the Christmas letter. In the room where it was staged, I had from his own lips the drama of that night.

At ten minutes past two o'clock on the morning after New Year's, he was awakened by a loud knock on the street door, and hastily putting on a dressing-gown and a pair of thin slippers, he hurried down stairs. As he opened the door a burly German in civilian's clothes shouted, "If you don't tell the truth you will be shot! You printed the Cardinal's letter."

"But yes," M. Dessain answered, "I am printer to the Archbishop, naturally, and, of

Pastoral Letters

course, I printed the letter. Will you come in?"

The detective turned and whistled down the street and in answer four Germans appeared quickly and all followed M. Dessain, still in his dressing-gown and shivering with cold, into the library.

As we sat there two years later, he pointed out the place his inquisitors took that January morning. "One sat there," he said; "the officer from Malines, with whom I, as head of the relief committee, had had considerable contact, there; the detective, over there by the window; and the most formidable member of the quintette, no other than the political chief of the governing forces, the Baron von der Lancken, who had come from Brussels for this night's work, there; while my chief interrogator, the Major, kept to the edge of the table or moved restlessly about.

"His first words were hardly reassuring: 'This is most serious; it is in fact, high treason. Why did you print something you had not first submitted to the censor?'"

M. Dessain could answer honestly that he had had no knowledge of any censorship ruling to cover the pastoral letters of His Eminence. The Major demanded a copy of the letter. There was one on the table, which he seized eagerly.

““Why did you not yourself examine the letter before printing it?””

“You are an officer; would you allow your men to question your orders?”

““Do the printing works belong to the Cardinal?””

“In the sense that we are under contract to print for him.”

At this point, the detective broke in angrily with a demand for the original and was more angry when told it had not been kept.

The Major then began reading the letter aloud, sentence by sentence, underlining as he read. He interrupted the reading to ask if the priests had already received it.

“Over two thousand copies,” M. Dessain replied very coolly, “have been distributed,

Pastoral Letters

and were read in the churches yesterday morning."

When he reached the passage enumerating the desolated villages, the Major cried: "Is that calculated to calm the people?" "Read on," said the Belgian, "and you will see that His Emience preaches submission under trial." He was getting rather nervous and worn with the strain, and was exercising all his ingenuity to hold the discussion to the latter part of the text. But when they reached the sentence, "You owe to the enemy neither esteem nor confidence," the Major lost his temper. "Go on," persisted the printer,— "We owe external obedience so long as it is not against our conscience."

The library was gloomy, and at this point M. Dessain, seeking any possible opportunity to break the tension, stepped to an electric button to turn on more light. But by inadvertence he extinguished what there was, and in an instant the detective was upon him. His companions could not help looking a little an-

noyed when, the proper button being pushed, they realized how stupid this suspicion was.

“You do not understand the Belgians,” M. Dessain continued. “I assure you this message will calm them; it will revive courage, but not incite revolt. Are you going to stop its publication?”

“‘Most certainly.’”

The reading finished and practically the entire text underlined, cold and weary though he was, M. Dessain was next obliged to lead across the court to the printing rooms. “There,” he said, “despite the seriousness of the moment, I could scarcely refrain from laughing aloud at the detective’s pompous pretences to knowledge of the press and its processes.

“From the rooms, we went back to the house, where I was permitted to dress, in the presence of the detective, however, who marched up and down in my room, smoking a cigar.

“Throughout the entire ordeal, I had one supreme desire; that my sisters should not

know what had happened until all was over, I could see only fruitless anxiety for them if they were awakened. But they were not to be spared. The tramping of the detective alarmed them, and they came to me, calm on the outside, but I knew with what inner forebodings. I did what I could to reassure them before I had to follow the German downstairs.

“There I was asked at what time the Cardinal got up, and replied that he would say mass at seven. Sentries were placed in the garden and in front of the house, and my sisters were ordered not to leave it or to look from the windows. It was just half-past four when the detective led the way into the street. There he whistled again, and this time between one hundred and one hundred and fifty German soldiers turned the corner. My guard of five could hardly have failed to catch the look of amusement I could not restrain. A body-guard of five and an escort of over a hundred soldiers, all for one man — this seemed rather overdoing it!

“Arrived at the Grand Place, I was conducted to a room of the Kreischef, about nine by six, furnished with a chair, a table and a gas-stove, and left alone. At six-thirty, when the watch, with fifes and drums marched past, I had no doubt that they had come to lead me to my execution.

“And all the while I was anxiously wondering what the Germans would dare attempt with His Eminence. Would they take him to Brussels? Fortunately, I had my missal with me, and could read it constantly during the four days of uncertainty which followed. I was taken out for trial at eleven o’clock Monday morning, and by five o’clock that evening was told that I was released on parole until a decision could be reached. On the day following my arrest (Saturday), soldiers had re-entered the printing rooms and seized presses and papers, but had found nothing incriminating, so after all their stupid, and I must admit, nerve-racking performance, I was sentenced to 500 marks or fifty days in prison.

Pastoral Letters

On receipt of the third notice, I paid the fine."

This was the experience of the printer of the Christmas letter as he told it to me in Malines, in 1916. His brother, the Burgomaster, was still at that time a prisoner in Germany.

But what of the Primate of Belgium during those days?

At six o'clock of the same morning following New Year's, he was preparing to say mass when a motor carrying German soldiers stopped before his house. Two sentinels were placed at the door, while an officer announced that he must see His Eminence at once. The Cardinal sent word that he could receive no one until mass was over, but the German insisted, and was finally admitted to the study, where he delivered a letter from Governor-General von Bissing, who demanded, he said, an immediate reply. The Cardinal repeated that until he had said mass, he could do nothing, and that in any case it would require some time to read the letter carefully and compose the reply. But the officer remained seated in front of the

study desk, announcing that he would stay until the answer was in his hands. In the end, however, he withdrew to the waiting room below, while the Cardinal went to the church to perform the morning mass.

When it was over, he again suggested that the German return to Brussels, but seeing insistence was useless, he sat down and began to write. At six o'clock that evening he delivered some thirty-two pages, in which he not only refuted the charges von Bissing had made but refused to retract a single one of his own statements in the Christmas pastoral, and particularly that one on which the enemy's anger was focussed, "My dear brethren, in your intimate conscience, you owe to the invading power neither esteem nor affection nor obedience." In the Cardinal's own story of this early morning interview, as he told it to us during his recent visit, he said that when the Governor-General's emissary demanded that he retract these words, he replied: "I do not express any personal opinion. I express the

Christian doctrine of right. According to Christian principles, there is in one country, but one legitimate authority; that country although it be reduced to only a small part of our territory, a few kilometers along the shore of the sea, still remains with our King and Government only, and only there do we owe obedience."

"You must give an account of that phrase," the officer said. "My account is very simple. I had a duty to fulfill; I fulfilled my duty and that is all I have to say." "Then," he added, "you will appear before the Governor-General."

This was on Saturday morning and I answered, "At what time?" "When we return to Brussels we will let you know by telephone when the Governor expects you." I said, "Very good: on one condition, that he invites me to-day or next Monday, because to-morrow, Sunday, I have a religious function to perform in Antwerp." He answered in a strong voice: "Oh, but you are at our disposal at any

moment." I said, "No, to-morrow is Sunday; I cannot come, and will not come." And then I noticed immediately that I had reasoned correctly; that is, that a display of weakness incites violence from the German, but moral resistance creates respect and fear.

"They went away, and during that day all the German motor cars in Belgium rode to all the parishes in my diocese to seize the letters, to threaten the priests with fines and with more severe pains if they dared read my pastoral.

"Since you fail to retract," the officer had said on going, "you will not be at liberty to leave your palace."

Two days later, His Eminence received a telegram from the United States (which the Germans felt compelled to deliver), asking if it were true that he was a prisoner. He wrote a direct reply but was forced to modify it, and to say little more than that virtually he was a prisoner, and that he would send details later.

Nothing came of the threat that His Eminence would have to answer the Governor-

General in Brussels, but on Sunday, he was not permitted to go to Antwerp to fulfill his engagements there.

Of course, each one of these petty indignities visited on the Primate of Belgium helped to fan the flame of resistance to the occupying power. People thronged the churches, even those who had not been inside them for years. One vied with another in his zeal to spread far and wide the forbidden message. And by some mysterious underground path, it made its way to the world outside. The word of truth was a living word; the enemy hand could not cover it.

It is only since the close of the war that our intense and long-baffled curiosity about the amazing victory of the underground way out from the death-encircled territory, has been satisfied. The escape of the Patriotism and Endurance letter furnished the first "secret passage" sensation; and we have only a short time ago heard revealed by the author himself, the mystery of that success.

“I had, of course, foreseen that this letter would displease our occupying friends, and I thought I had better send it out of the country, before it should be published in Belgium, and so I did.

“Six days before the printing of my letter, I sent it abroad to Holland. I had in Holland a very good priest, who was my representative among our refugees there. I sent my letter first by a courageous young man who tried to get into Holland. I never learned whether he did pass. A second way of sending my letter was by a little boat which was going down the Scheldt to Holland, but I had a third one, most sure of all, and it succeeded.

“At the frontier between Holland and Belgium we have a seminary where there are seven or eight hundred students, and for their living they receive usually a great quantity of Dutch cheese in boxes. The Germans liked the cheese and let it pass into our country. Well, I thought I could send my letter very surely this way: When the cheeses came to Belgium to

Pastoral Letters

the seminary, the papers in which they were wrapped were, of course, crumpled and dirty. I made my letter old and soiled, and it was sent back with all those filthy papers in the boxes to Holland.

“So my friend received it, and I think he told me afterwards, not with disgust, but with respect. He took the letter and published it and sent it to France, to England, and you got it from England, here in America, and so the whole world knew the letter.”

The Cardinal issued his second important war-time pastoral three months later, offering it in Lent as a tribute to the late Pope Pius X and to his successor Pope Benedict XI and at the same time as an exposition of the idea behind the institution of the papacy. Altogether it forms a lucid and masterly analysis of the principles governing the Catholic society.

The churchman sees other societies and governments of the world falling asunder, victims of the tooth of Time, while the Roman Church,

because of its divine sources of life, ever renews its youth. Outwardly, it preserves its continuity and unity through its hierarchical constitution, also divinely ordained, at whose summit stands the Pope, the supreme interpreter of the written and traditional doctrine of Christ and his first apostles, the chief law-giver of Christian society. Inwardly, because it is a living organism, it is constantly assimilating from the outer world, from every department of life, and developing in accordance with the general laws controlling organized beings.

On this constant and universal assimilation of substance from the outside world, rests the Cardinal's chief defense of the doctrine of papal infallibility promulgated by the Vatican Council of 1870. For if the church is to escape the fate of other societies, these external products must be critically examined by a supreme and inexhaustible authority, who must define the rule for the support of the Church, the rule of the truth of faith and morals.

Pastoral Letters

Near the beginning of the letter, in refutation of a certain criticism of the late Pope Pius X, the Cardinal has already accounted for the continuance of the natural, human qualities of the Holy Father, along with his gifts of inspiration. "Certainly a powerful personality cannot reveal itself fully, without riding rough-shod over humdrum habits, without endangering even estimable claims of only secondary importance. Any far-reaching course of action demands some violence at the start; for humanity, as a whole, is not roused without a shock from its drowsiness or from its dreams. On the way to the desired end some even legitimate preoccupations are apt to be disturbed and to suffer. These lesser human vexations are the reverse side of the triumph of any great cause. Assuredly if Providence willed, it could inspire all rulers with a perfect wisdom, and could require of the world an obedience involving no sacrifice. But it is pleased instead to leave all leaders, even Popes, their own temperament and emotions, and even

those weaknesses which we term the defects of their good qualities. It requires that submission should be ennobled by humility, patience and constancy; and this spectacle of the moral order, viewed in its fullness, is none the less fine, for being more human. In history as in nature, departures from the course of law are exceptional.

“The church on earth is but a part of the heavenly church, not differing from it in essence. Through Christ” they are one; “the Episcopate one with the Pope, the Pope one with the Episcopate”—that is the living principle of the unity of the church, that is virtually the whole church in its unity and fruitfulness. Through the Episcopate united with the Pope, the earthly representative of Christ, the whole church forms only one body with Christ who in his divine nature is one with God Himself.”

This letter turned men’s minds for a moment away from the bitter reality of a divided and suffering world, toward a visioned world

united under the law of love. Its call to Christian unity carried indirectly an appeal for national solidarity, and must have strengthened the common resistance to the attempt to destroy that solidarity.

The people realized their need of the spiritual *secour* dispensed from Malines; they fed on it. But as months lengthened to years, and information from the world outside, whence alone actual deliverance could come, filtered more and more rarely into their prison, everywhere the cry went up for something more, some definite news as to the true situation, some authentic interpretation of the ceaseless booming of the guns to the south. And when it was known, in January, 1916, that His Eminence had succeeded in his effort to respond to the call of Pope Benedict for an educational conference at Rome, and that he would be allowed to pass through the electric barrier to Holland, the interest was intense. The whole country counted the days till his return — if return he might. The lenten pas-

toral "My Return from Rome" was the reward of their waiting, though in it the Cardinal was not able to speak freely. "There are many things I cannot tell you," he said, "You will understand me." And they did, and read between the lines of his account of the touching kindness of his reception by the Holy Father and of the enthusiastic acclamations marking his journey.

He refreshed their long-tried courage by telling them how it was estimated by the outside nations:

"The moral level of neutrals, or formerly neutral nations, is higher. They understand the spirit of sacrifice, they do homage to it, they appreciate it in you, they admire you. Your generation has made a glorious entrance into history.

"Is this not a conquest, my brethren, and, in the sense in which moral advantage is more highly esteemed than material advantage, are you not the most glorious conquerors?

"Oh yes! you weep, I know; there is mourn-

ing on every hand. . . . The day will come when we shall weep no more.

“But from the first I warned you, that in my humble opinion, our trial would be a long one, and that success would be the guerdon of the nations who can endure most bravely.

“My conviction, both natural and supernatural, of our ultimate victory is more firmly rooted in my soul than ever. If, indeed, it could have been shaken, the assurance given me by several disinterested and careful observers of the general situation, notably those belonging to the two Americas, would have sufficed to consolidate it.

“We shall triumph, do not doubt it, but we are not yet at the end of our sufferings.”

And then to give them the definite information they longed for, he added,

“France, England and Russia have entered into a compact not to conclude peace until the independence of Belgium is completely restored, and an ample indemnity has been made to her. Italy, in her turn, has

given her adhesion to the London compact.

“Our future is not doubtful.

“But we must prepare for it. We shall prepare for it by cultivating the virtue of patience and the spirit of self-sacrifice.”

Naturally, the Invader objected to all of this, but the paragraph that particularly incensed him was the following:

“‘The King is not saved by a great army’, says the Psalmist; ‘vain is the horse for safety, neither shall he be saved by the abundance of his strength. . . . Our soul waiteth for the Lord, for he is our helper and protector.’

“Imagine a belligerent nation, sure of its army corps, its munitions, its commanders, with every prospect of gaining a victory. If God should allow the germs of an epidemic to spread among the ranks, all optimistic previsions would at once be brought to naught.”

According to the enemy, in so futilely holding out hope the Cardinal was not only violating the laws for speaking which had been laid down for him, but he was injuring and

also inflaming the mind of the Belgian people!

In the long drawn-out anguish of the ever darkening days of 1916, it was inevitable that courage should falter, and the shepherd, watching his flock with anxious vigilance, tried to say the word that would lift up the heart. He sought to restore courage by throwing the events of the moment against the background of eternity. Nowhere does he speak more eloquently, or with more splendid vision, than in "The Voice of God." Very characteristically, his first word is one of sympathy:

"Yes, indeed, our trial is very long. Day after day, I hear you repeating this, and there is nobody, I think, who does not feel as you do." It is only, he points out, in reading their deeper meaning, that we can become reconciled to events as they occur.

"God speaks to us both from without and from within.

"From without, He speaks to us in the wonders of nature and in the lessons taught by events.

“From within He speaks to us in the gentle breath of the grace of the Holy Spirit.

“The Voice of nature is generally harmonious and calm, like the solemn march of the sun through space, like the murmur of the waters, the growth of corn, the slow evolution of the seasons. But it is sometimes violent and terrible, like the voice of thunder and lightning, or the upheaval of tempests, or the shocks that make the earth tremble and pour the volcanic lava upon it.

“The world of human history, too, has its passages of peace, its periods of concentrated work, its economic, intellectual, artistic and generally civilizing successes. But then again at certain times, passions are loosened, hate stifles the very voice of love, and death seems for a while to triumph over life.

“And yet God speaks to us all of the time.

“Every historical period is a page in the divine book of Providence.

“But whatever may happen to you, there is

Pastoral Letters

something in you that no man, no event can touch — your soul.

“My brethren, do but look up and keep your eyes fixed on the polar star of your eternity.

“And you will see created circumstances sinking into the half-light of things of nothing that pass away, and that are called in the Scriptures (that other direct and personal voice of God) now smoke that glides and disappears, now a cloud that dissolves, now a shadow that vanishes, now a flower that fades, now a wave lost in the ocean whence it rose.

“Eternity!

“My Brethren, all of us lack courage to look it, even once, full in the face. Embrace it as closely as you can; fix it but for an hour, for a half hour, for a quarter of an hour, in your imagination; let your thoughts cleave to it; and during that quarter of an hour determine to see naught but that; and, in that, God, God made man, your Creator, your Savior, your Judge; with yourselves in face of it, made for it. Determine for that brief while

to forget all that is not eternity. You will rise again enlightened, tempered like steel, with minds made up and resolution firm."

"Once we have attempted to see to-day in the light of forever, we can go further and seek to unlock the mystery of events. The key is to be found in the sublime mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, in the fact that from death arose life."

I have already referred in Chapter I to the pastoral, "*Per Crucem ad Lucem*," which appeared during this same summer of 1916, and which the Cardinal read in Sainte Gudule.

During the following fall and winter and from then until the close of the war, universal fear and grief centered about the most infamous of the Invader's practices, that of deporting Belgian workmen to Germany, or behind the fighting lines. And though Cardinal Mercier was battling as he never had before, directly with the German governing powers, he was unwearyingly issuing instructions to his priests regarding their duties

Pastoral Letters

towards the pitiful victims of this slavery system, and talking directly to the people themselves, as often as he could. The Epiphany pastoral of 1917, "The Duty of a Priest," and the later, "Courage, My Brethren," are among the most important utterances of this period. And in 1918, the lenten message, "The Meaning of Events," because of its length—printed, it forms a brochure of some thirty-five pages—and the loftiness of its thought, stands first.

The attempt to analyze events in perspective, against the background of the past, and of the future, is always profitable. When such a trained thinker and spiritual seer as the Cardinal offers an interpretation of them, humanity becomes his debtor. In his review of the past and the present, he sees proved, first, the truth that suffering, accepted, draws one closer to God. And he adds, almost sternly, "It is necessary to look suffering in the face, and to define one's attitude toward it. You are at liberty to revolt against it, but the inexorable law will break your resistance. . . . If the

child resists under the hand of the mother who is dressing its wounds, the pain is sharper. . . . If you support with patience, the sorrow that falls upon you, you will be surprised at the relative ease with which you can dominate it.

“It is, then, in your power to suffer. Suffering, accepted for a legitimate or superior end, honors humanity. Nothing great is accomplished without it. When peoples, families, individuals, have no other ambition than to enjoy themselves, they are doomed to decadence.

“Divine Providence arrested the nations on the slope where they were descending, each more or less precipitately, and saved them in recalling them to the law of sacrifice, blessed by Providence.”

The second lesson which the study of recent history teaches, is that in all, God reveals himself as the Master. Such social evils as alcoholism, the breaking of the law of rest and devotion on the Sabbath, the neglect of familiar

Pastoral Letters

virtues, and such apostasy in the intellectual world as resulted from the pernicious teachings of Kant and helped to bring about the war; — from these evils, through the sufferings of this war; God will call us back to righteousness. For, and here the Primate announces his third point, just as in the suffering of Christ was the promise of the resurrection, so in every trial of ours, is the seed of the new life.

“The key of history, my very dear brothers, is in the exaltation of the Holy Cross.

“Suppose,” he continues, “that on August 4, 1914, people had not known how to die; suppose that the youth of our nation, instead of running to the bureaus of voluntary inscription, had hidden themselves from danger, placing repose and enjoyment above sacrifice, where would we be now?

“They have revealed to you that you are not in this world to enjoy yourselves, but to learn how to die.

“And if you, wives and mothers, sorrowing for your husbands, and sons, absent, or per-

haps gone forever, if you should seek to shorten the time of our suffering, in demanding a peace that would be no more than a truce or a snare, would you not be sullyng the honor of your country?

“To die,—that is the greatest and most beautiful act possible to man.

“There is nothing, nor can there ever be anything, in any possible world, more sublime than the free immolation of Calvary.”

And thus the Cardinal concludes in 1918, as he began in 1914, with the preaching of the law of love and sacrifice as the law that saves.

None of the attempts to silence him had succeeded, and throughout the four fateful years his letters and announcements continued to appear. Across the days of darkness and the nights of weeping, his voice carried comfort and counsel, until the interminable years were finally ended, and on November 15, 1918, he could print “*La Victoire! Homage à la Justice de Dieu!*”

“On Monday, the 11th of November, at

Pastoral Letters

three o'clock in the afternoon, all the bells of the city of Malines exulted, chanting a hymn of victory."

How little lies on the surface of words! Back of the Cardinal's statement that all the bells exulted, is the brave battle he fought to save them; they were there to exult because he had won. For toward the close of February, 1918, the Germans ordered an inventory of the bells and organs of churches, which the Cardinal followed swiftly by a letter of advice to his clergy. "This news will deeply affect you," he said. "Taught by experience, we can no longer entertain any illusion. The inventory of to-day is the signal of the requisition of to-morrow.

"We add that the taking away of our bells against the wish of the religious authority and in spite of its protest is sacrilege. •

"The bell is a sacred object; its function is sacred. It announces your initiation into Christian life, your confirmation, your first communion, your Christian marriage. The

bell weeps over your dead. . . . It associates its prayer with all the great memories, happy and unhappy, of our country.

“Yes, the seizure of the bells will be a profanation and whoever coöperates in it will lend a hand to sacrilege.

“In the name of the liberty of the Church, in the name of the sanctity of Catholic worship, in the name of international law, we condemn and reprove the seizure of the bells and organs of our churches, we forbid the clergy and the faithful of our diocese to help in removing them, we refuse to accept the price of the sacred objects which are torn from us by force.

“Strengthened by an unconquerable hope, we await the hour of our God.”

The bells of Malines remained. And so their defender could write in the final week of victory, “The bells of the city of Malines exulted, chanting a hymn of victory.

“On Monday, the 11th of November, at three o’clock in the afternoon, the national

Pastoral Letters

colors floated on high from the tower of Saint Rombauld, outspreading their folds toward Termonde and Ghent, calling to our midst the King and his soldiers. And the announcement has come that on Tuesday following, the 19th of November, Albert the Magnanimous will return as victor to his capital.

“The triumph of Justice is complete. The public conscience is satisfied.

“Thanks to Thee, O Divine Master, who has blessed our arms, saved our country, accepted our expiations, sanctified our sufferings. We knew, O God, that Thou lovest Belgium; to-day no person can doubt it.

“Glory be to God, Sovereign Master of events; glory be to the allied nations, powerful artisans of the great victory; glory be to our King, our army, our prisoners, military and civil; to the victims of the deportations and of tyranny; to all who were the alleviators of the general misery; glory to the Belgian nation, rejuvenated through her sacrifice!

“To-day, I have but one thought, that of

translating your first impressions, I wish to proclaim in your name the justice of God.

“ No, my brothers, God has not our impatience. He works with power and with softness. Generally he allows the natural development of secondary causes. He permits even that men abuse, up to a certain point, their liberty, because he knows that in his own hour, He will draw good from evil, and that iniquity itself will surrender before His unfailing justice.

“ Yes, God is great and He works greatly.

“ Glory be to God, my dear brothers, Glory to his justice.

“ May the Belgian people, may the conquerors and the conquered remember His justice forever! ” ¹

¹ It has been difficult to choose from among the pastorals and to cut those selected. Fortunately, those who wish it, will soon be able to possess the authoritative and complete edition of the Cardinal's letters, now being printed by M. Dessain of Malines.

CHAPTER IV

THE CARDINAL AND ROME IN WAR-TIME

Would the course of the war have been changed had Cardinal Mercier of Malines instead of Cardinal della Chiesa of Bologna been elected pope in August, 1914? The irrefutable clarity of the Cardinal's pronouncement on the justice and injustice of the war, his uncompromising arraignment of wrong, and dauntless championship of right, set against what to many has seemed the unnecessary quiescence of the Holy See, has led to this question, which is, of course, one of those queries, history so often evokes but does not answer.

Certainly the first Christmas message of the Belgian Primate sounded around the world with comforting and restoring power. Suffering millions heard in his voice, the echo, across the ages, of the immortal challenge of Gregory VII to Henry IV, and of Thomas à Becket

Mercier

to Henry II of England. Perhaps it was better for the nations that this prelate was outside the inhibiting walls of the Vatican, freer to speak and to act.

Pius X died August 20, 1914, of a broken heart, it is said, as he saw the world engulfed in blood. At that time, Cardinal Mercier was obliged to leave his threatened city and its terrified inhabitants (his train was the last one out of Malines for some time, since the Germans tore up the tracks immediately after its departure) to hasten to Rome to assist in the election of the new pope. There were many who believed the choice would fall on himself. His chances had been freely and favorably discussed in conversation and in print. I remember how inevitably, later, those of us who followed him under the Occupation thought of him as qualified for the highest post of leadership the Church had to offer. It is said that in this 1914 Conclave, some votes were cast for him, though the secret of the election has been well guarded. The fact that he was Pri-

The Cardinal and Rome

mate of one of the belligerent countries may have been sufficient to bar him. At any rate, when the crimson velvet canopies outspread about the cardinals were lifted, in sign that the choice had been made, the one above Cardinal della Chiesa remained lowered. The Italian, and not the Belgian, was pope. Cardinal Mercier hurried to the new pontiff to receive his first embrace and to beg that his first blessing might be given to desolated Belgium.

At Rome he had received tidings of the destruction of an important part of Louvain, of the further bombardment of Malines, and particularly of the injury to his Archbishop's palace and his beautiful church beyond the Dyle River. He refers to his suffering on hearing this news in the Christmas pastoral, where he says: "Afar from my diocese, without means of communication with you, I was compelled to lock my grief within my own afflicted heart, and carry it, with the thought of you, which never left me, to the foot of the Crucifix."

From Rome, he hastened, with anxious heart, back to his flock. Paris—England—Holland—Antwerp, was his route, and he was acclaimed at stations on his return as he had been on his arrival. Regaining Malines he at once threw his whole energy into the tremendous task of sustaining and developing the national courage. As 1914 closed, his voice rang in comfort and exhortation across the world, seeking to help it to enter the new year on the tide of faith and fortitude. 1915 dragged its torturing length. During it, the Germans, who each day recognized more clearly the dangerous opponent they had in this prelate, endeavored to bring about a break between him and Rome. Of these attempts and the Pope's repulse of them and of other things, Cardinal Mercier can now for the first time freely speak, though he had, as early as April, 1915, in his pastoral "Devotion to Christ," attempted to silence certain calumnies against both Pope Pius and Pope Benedict. Now he speaks without restraint, in a recent

The Cardinal and Rome

vigorous pastoral (August, 1919), on the attitude of Pope Benedict during the war.

This defence, for such it is, was undertaken because of the distant and near criticism of His Holiness that reached Malines, even before the isolating walls were shattered. It sorely troubled him, especially since some of the criticism centered on the pope's supposed disapproval of his own action. The letter is in his customary lucid and impressive style, and has been widely printed and reported. Including, as it does at the end, Pope Benedict's reply, it stands as a historical document of importance.

After reminding his readers of the circumstances of the Occupation, which prevented him from freely explaining what he knew to be the attitude of the Pope, he throws light on some of the difficulties of 1915. "At the end of the year 1915," he says, "the German press, and that section of the Belgian press in the pay of the enemy, set to work to draw a contrast between the acts of the Belgian Episcopacy and those of the sovereign Pontiff. They

tried to give color to the idea that the Holy See disavowed my conduct. We did not believe this statement . . . but our enemies from outside, and from inside, accused us with such warmth of mixing in politics and praised the neutrality of the Sovereign Pontiff in such a way that your affection for us was not without a certain apprehension, and the filial confidence in our Holy Father was lowered with many in proportion as fears for our person became more lively."

1915 closed in darkness, 1916 began more darkly. At its opening, occurred one of the most dramatic incidents of the war, for the Cardinal. In January the Pope summoned him to Rome to an extraordinary meeting of the congregation of seminaries and universities. At once, the burning question everywhere was, "Will he be allowed to go?" With every month the prison had become a more real prison, with its electric death barrier all along the North and barrier of bayonet and battery on all other sides. Inside, we knew something

The Cardinal and Rome

of the efforts of the Germans to prevent the journey, or if they must permit it, to secure themselves against the return of their dangerous adversary. "The Occupier," the Cardinal in his letter explains, "caused a report to be circulated to the effect that I had been called to Rome to hear a censure inflicted upon me by my spiritual superior. The enemy said to himself that if I left I should return no more. At the end of a religious ceremony in the Collegiate Church of Sainte Gudule in Brussels, an officer had awkwardly allowed the remark to escape him that I had just passed the threshold of my Cathedral for the last time."

Thus, quite sufficiently warned, he left no stone unturned in his effort to safeguard both his going and coming. He sent word to His Holiness of the danger attending his departure, and the Vatican's response was immediate. Pope Benedict demanded that neither Brussels nor Berlin would oppose his return, and received a formal declaration first by telegram and then in writing, that his request was

acceded to. Mgr. Mercier left for Rome January sixteenth.

But despite their promises, German diplomats, on the eve of the Cardinal's departure from Italy, tried to prevent his return to Belgium. "With great energy," he says, "the Vatican held its own; it declared that if my liberty was curtailed, the telegraphic correspondence and the letters relating to my journey would be published. Imperial diplomacy gave way; the day afterwards, I was at liberty to leave without hindrance."

Continuing, he tells of the affectionate warmth of his reception by the Holy Father: "As soon as I arrived, he received me with open arms, gave me audiences on several occasions, allowed me to think aloud before him, received from my hands several *dossiers* regarding the invasion of our land, the crimes committed by the Invader, and the resistance which we offered to the mischievous and perfidious proceedings of the German government in Belgium."

The Cardinal and Rome

In farewell, the Pope bestowed his photograph, below which was written, "To our venerable Brother, Cardinal Mercier, we grant with all our heart the apostolic blessing, assuring him that we are always with him and that we share his sorrows and anxieties, since his cause is also our cause." This gift and its message the Cardinal could report to his people on his return, but he could not explain its full significance.

Cardinal Mercier does not refer, in this recent letter, to the hurried journey South of Cardinal von Hartmann of Cologne, who hastened down to Rome a few weeks ahead of him, in the hope of carrying back to his own people some assurance of the Holy Father's approval. He got nothing that he could publish!

The Cardinal goes on to say, "Consider it, I ask you: Your bishops were accused in Brussels and in Berlin of mixing themselves in politics; the accusation was made by the highest authorities of the Empire at the tribunal of Benedict XV; the accusers flattered them-

selves that they would gag us. They thought the Pope would make himself their servant because they were stronger, and they thought he would give way to force.

“The silence of the Pope should have already been a disavowal of the accusation. But here the Pope speaks; he speaks to demand liberty for my return to the midst of those whom I was expected to excite to rebellion; he speaks to declare in writing that he makes his own our cause, our sorrow, our agony.”

The silence of the Pope, at other times, he explains, must be interpreted as approval of the attitude of the Belgian bishops.

“This tacit approval has applied to every day during fifty months. Every time that the rights of our people were abrogated, your bishops became your defenders; every time we made it a matter of duty to send to the head of our hierarchy the first copy of our protests. Our chief never censured or found fault with our writings or our conduct. And besides the pastorals and documents to which publicity

The Cardinal and Rome

was given, I wrote to His Holiness several confidential letters to keep him in touch with the chief proceedings in my administration.

“Never, either directly or indirectly, has the Pope demanded a change of attitude. At one exceptionally delicate moment, several Belgians allied themselves to the Germans in order to try to make His Holiness believe that I was betraying the true interests of the people of my diocese and the Belgian people. The members of the self-styled “Council of Flanders” in a calumnious pamphlet, which they hoped to transmit to the Vatican through the Apostolic Nuncio, asked the Pope to suspend me. The Nuncio refused the message. The ‘Council of Flanders’ had to send it to Rome by a round-about route. Rome never even took the trouble to speak to me of it.”

The activists’ intrigues, whose object was as we know to break up Belgium, were, in pursuance of a favorite method of attack, fomented by Germany. On January 29, 1917, the Cardinal gave the deans of his diocese

clear warning of the perils to Belgium in these intrigues, and vigorous instruction concerning their duty to crush them. Had the Pope leaned toward Germany, he could have disavowed these instructions; on the contrary, he showed that he approved of them, and he left the Primate full liberty of action.

“The Pope did not intend to substitute his action for that of the Belgian hierarchy in every particular instance, even if he had the right and power to do so; he left to his subordinates their liberty of judgment and of action.”

Further on, the pastoral emphasizes the continued attitude of the Pope against the violation of justice: “Following the violation of Belgian neutrality, an unquestioned violation, admitted by the authors responsible for the heinous crime, the Pope in his consistorial allocation of January 22, 1915, denounced before the world the culpability of Germany. German diplomacy was irritated by this; it tried to protest. The Pope recalled all belligerents equally to feelings of humanity. Since then,

The Cardinal and Rome

his protests against criminal acts have been multiplied. It would be superfluous to enumerate them anew."

There was no procedure or judicial form, says the writer, by which the Pope could announce a final judgment during war. It must be remembered that the belligerents with common consent did not ask him to act as arbiter.

"My dearly beloved Brothers," concludes the Cardinal, "I do not flatter myself with the hope that these explanations will put an end to the campaign of insinuation and travesties which in certain quarters has been organized and carried out against our Holy Father, Benedict XV; but I am confident that in the name of truth and justice you will repel untruth more resolutely and will face calumny boldly."

This letter of the Belgian bishops ends with Pope Benedict's reply to it:

"It is with the greatest pleasure that we have read the address, which you, dearest son, and you, venerable brethren, have been good

enough to send us the very day when, for the first time, you have been able to meet again after more than four years' sad separation. Your letter recalls the long series of calamities which your beloved country has just suffered and of which the sad results are still felt.

“With great delicacy of feeling, you bring to mind also our solemn protests against the injustices and violations of right committed in regard to Belgium as well as our efforts to lessen so much suffering, and bring to light your undying confidence in our action.

“This confidence was well founded. We could not help viewing your people with deep sympathy and feeling a particular pity for them.

“While we occupied ourselves with all our power to bring some alleviation to the suffering of so many of our sons in misfortune, we never ceased to work to restore complete political, military and economic independence to your dear nation, and likewise to demand reparation for the damage she has suffered.”

CHAPTER V

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Cardinal Mercier has just landed on our shores, and journalists, reporting their first impressions, have with some surprise noted that the dominant qualities of the fighting prelate seem to be love, and gentleness and humility. They expected, perhaps, to see at once evidences of the energy and courage that defied a power before which the world seemed crumbling. They went out to welcome the intrepid champion of freedom; they met the gentle shepherd of souls.

It is this lover of souls and apostle of peace who speaks in the many letters written before and during the war to the clergy of his diocese. More directly than the pastorals, these intimate conversations with his priests reveal the tender shepherd. The pastorals were addressed to the diocese, or more broadly, to all

people; such letters as those, for example, preaching a retreat to his priests, are his ardent communings within the inner circle of his family. In one of them he beautifully voices his dependence on that family: "It is sweet, dear comrades, to tell you to-day that I was very close to you in your trials, sharing them with you, and being inspired by the spectacle of your heroism. I feel the necessity to thank you. You do not know to what point your fidelity was strength to me, and your docility a support. For my part, since more than two months I have offered the holy mass every day for you, I shall continue to do so during these five weeks of retreat. I offer you all that may be meritorious in the work of each of my days, my pains and my consolations of body and of heart, all absolutely are for you. It is in saving you that I save myself. Sanctify me in your turn that I may be capable of sanctifying you. And thus, my dear friends, there will operate between us that profound union in Christ which our divine Savior at the moment

The Good Shepherd

of quitting the world, asked of his Father for us, his chosen ones, 'May they be one.' " The Cardinal once said of Pope Benedict XV, "He permitted me to think aloud before him;" in his letters he thinks aloud before his priests. In the preface to the most recent collection of them, under the title, "The Inner Life," he writes: "In this humble work, I have set down the most intimate things of my soul."

A study of the five hundred pages of this book leaves one with two outstanding portraits. One pictures a good shepherd, a lover of every lamb, who yearns to bring each safely within the fold of temporal and eternal happiness; he is solicitous, humble, dependent on the loyalty and security and felicity of his flock for his own joy; he both leads and follows. The other represents the rapt contemplator of divine mysteries, prostrate before the throne of Grace; his spirit, transported on the wings of faith, loses itself in the vision of the infinite reaches of divine love as revealed in the Catholic conception of the mystery of the Holy

Trinity, in the plan of redemption for man, in the possibility of present union of the human spirit with the divine, and of the eternal reward of ever-continued being in absolute oneness with that of the creator and ruler of the universe. So he stands revealed through his frank and fervent utterances to those nearest him.

"The Inner Life" is dated All Saints, 1918, and was written as the war was closing, to urge the clergy to enter into retreat for five weeks, and to offer them material for thought, and stimulus toward devotion, during that period. Last Christmas there were a few early copies on the table of the little reception room of the archiepiscopal palace where we Americans were so cordially welcomed throughout the war, and as I was leaving, after a memorable hour, His Eminence gave me one. We had talked of many things this first free Christmas morning, and some of them, he felt, were further discussed in this volume.

After the past faith-shattering years the idea of the retreat is especially sympathetic. At

The Good Shepherd

this time when the world must call on all its forces and wisdom to resurrect itself, after five cataclysmic years, the letters call for a period of contemplation in preparation, for a moment of pause before the gigantic undertaking.

“We are surrounded by ruins. On the eve of great reconstructions, sharpen your courage; arm your wills. More than ever our complete accord is necessary.

“It seems to me that the fact of our uniting in this sinister hour in the calm of a spiritual retreat will be a public expression of faith and of abandon to the divine will.

“Yes, while the cannon roar, and the masses agitate, and arms clash, while over all the surface of the globe the tempest rages, come here during five weeks in successive groups, and closing the ear to the tumult of the catastrophe, pass the frontiers of your anguish, pass beyond your sufferings, and letting yourselves be dominated by that which is eternal, rest in the voluntary forgetfulness of that which passes, upon the Heart, ardently loved, of Him who,

in the apparently deserted barge of the world, sure of the wisdom of his designs and of his omnipotence and unfailing love, sleeps besides the propellor.

“Will this not be to give to men and angels a grandiose spectacle of faith and abandon, and to God a magnificent testimony of adoration and acquiescence full of love in his most mysterious designs?”

This, is, however, to be a period of contemplation only in preparation for greater activity; for this prelate of powerful initiative, far from preaching detachment from life, distinctly counsels the reverse. In the Epiphany pastoral of 1917, “The Duty of a Priest,” he says: “I cannot admit that, under the pretext of a need for greater retirement in piety, the Christian should isolate himself, in a disdainful detachment, and contemplate the war, from outside, as if it could only affect souls of a secondary quality. Faith should impregnate the whole life, the intercourse of individuals and that of societies. The events of history,

The Good Shepherd

great or small, resounding or hidden, are all in the service of the highest work of divine Providence, the Church of Christ."

In the preface of "The Inner Life" in apologizing for repetition and lengthiness in the six chapters, the Cardinal explains the difficulty he had to find undisturbed hours for writing. "Nevertheless," he says, "obeying the counsel of St. Francis de Sales, I have gathered all the little morsels of leisure that could be saved, here and there, from the pressure of interruptions, to give them to this work, esteeming that I could not refuse a service, however defective, which your piety solicited." But the iteration for which he apologizes, far from detracting from his work, adds to it a certain biblical impressiveness and beauty.

The six conversations combine a purely spiritual appeal, ardently portraying the duty and beauty of complete dedication of one's life to God, with a certain amount of theological and scholastic discussion. The reason for this double character of the book appears in the

following lines: "It was my first intention to avoid such technical accessories as you will run across, and not to mix abstract speculations with a work that I wished to be living and entirely spiritual. But I have acceded to the desire of several priests that I add to my work some scholastic explanations. Besides, one can see the parenthesis in advance and leap over it; the parenthesis suppressed, the thread of the thought can be easily recovered."

Pointing briefly in advance to some of the things driven home by the four years' fiery trial, the good shepherd says:

"To love is to wish well.

"I would see you all happy. I have the most ardent desire to contribute to your well-being. And by that I mean not only your eternal, but your terrestrial happiness. The one is, moreover, a part of the other. Earthly happiness is but that of heaven anticipated. Cardinal Deschamp used to like to say that our heaven is very close, at the other side of the wall. The wall is this agitated and perishable

The Good Shepherd

envelope, the body. The body falls, and the soul sees God, returns to God. From the trial it passes to beatitude.

“Men of little faith that we are, why do we not realize in our daily life that which we believe? Have we not been sufficiently shaken during these four years of war? Have we not been sufficiently warned that it is insensate to live for terrestrial interests; that it is necessary to simplify our material life, our moral life, liberate ourselves from mortal attachments? Our soul is the dwelling-place of God. To live a life in intimate relationship with God is to live the life eternal of God, the spiritual life, the interior life. We are on the eve of tremendous reconstructions. Let us not fall back into the errors of the past. May our actions spring from the sources of grace, let us drink in large draughts of the living waters that mount toward eternity. Taking to ourselves the counsel of the apostle, let us live a moral and priestly life without fissure, let the interior be holy and sanctify the exterior.”

And then at the close of his preface, he sums up the main thought of the letters to follow in a few words: "There are not in this work clearly marked divisions. One single fundamental thought is developed under a double aspect, one objective, the other subjective.

"God descends toward the soul and draws it to him. The soul allows itself to be captured and to be reunited with its creator.

"God acts and gives himself; the soul responds and delivers itself.

"God lives in the soul; the soul lives in God."

This is the kernel of his thought, but in its full development it covers four hundred and ninety pages. There is, to be sure, as he warned us, frequent repetition, but there is also sustained and logical progress.

At the beginning of their five weeks' meditation those in retreat are asked to reflect on present world-conditions, on its dechristianization and demoralization. This state, the Cardinal tells them, is due to many causes, all of

The Good Shepherd

which may be summed up in the term modernism, which includes the three great evils, Naturalism, Protestantism and Kantism. Naturalism is the misunderstanding of the supernatural order, for it argues without faith, and "reason without faith is near-sighted; and the will without grace is crippled." Protestantism he regards as a deplorable departure from the divinely indicated path of Christian progress. And the rationalism and individualism of Kant he had long before the war vigorously attacked as a philosophy most dangerous to civilization, which conviction he saw confirmed by the war.

The remedy for the sad world situation, precipitated by modernism, is only to be found in the more zealous preaching of the holy mysteries of the Christian religion as interpreted by the Catholic Church, and in a more complete illustration of Christian beliefs in daily living. This conclusion leads him, in the third conversation, to the consideration of Christian perfection and the possibility of its attainment

on earth. He holds it as not only possible of attainment, but as the end of all the commandments. It consists in union with God through charity, and by charity, he explains, he means far more than philanthropy. Charity is love, love of what we ought to love, the result of the working within us of the holy spirit. Through the mystery of the Holy Trinity, that is, because of the love of God for his Son, and of the Son for God, and of their unity in the Holy Spirit, which is the eternal expression of their united love, we may live in God. For our souls can be, if we do not close the door, the dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit. And always the clear evidence that the Holy Spirit has taken up its abode with us is that we are living a life of charity, of love.

Then more directly, more personally, in Chapter Four, he questions, "Yes, or no, are we religious?" Do we possess this virtue, charity, which seconded by those of faith and hope, leads the soul to its goal? Only through our love of others can we save ourselves.

The Good Shepherd

These questions he follows with suggestions for the practical living program of the servant of God, which carry, indeed, their admonition to us all. The duty of every priest is to safeguard the physical and moral, as well as the spiritual, health of his community. Specifically, his fight against alcoholism and prostitution must be unrelenting, for these strike at the hearth. Hygiene is more valuable than medicine. He must give knowledge of it and counsel to fathers and mothers and children, to the poor and to the rich. The shepherd must be ready to sacrifice for the good of his flock, his effort, his time, his energy. He owes them a labor of initiative, yet it must be, too, patient and obscure and persevering.

And cost what it may, in the midst of all his work, the priest must reserve time for study. He must make economies; take time. "In idling after breakfast, in the lazy reading of papers, in long drawn-out repasts, in empty chattering and aimless visits; who knows, in cards, perhaps, or other frivolous parties; in

sleep prolonged beyond necessity;—how much of superfluity there is which may be cut down! Has not the war already taught us to simplify our life? Let us simplify it more. You will find yourselves lighter, more alert. Man is born to work, as the bird to fly, says the Scripture. Have always nearby some piece of work, so that as soon as you have a minute, you can put your hand on it. You will be surprised at what five minutes totals when multiplied several times each year by 365 or 366!”

“Be generous of your temporal as of your spiritual possessions. Always it is too little to give what one has, if one is not disposed also to give what one is.”

From this pertinent advice, the Cardinal pursuing farther the idea of Christian perfection, turns swiftly, in the final conversation, to his most abstract theme, the consideration of the supernatural order of grace. Here his argument rests on the belief that there is a supernatural state in our present life which does not differ essentially from that of the

The Good Shepherd

future life. That which constitutes it is the union of the soul with God, which is possible on this earth through the sanctifying grace of the holy spirit and its first effect, charity. In this union resides eternal life, that is, for the Christian, for it is essentially the same here and in eternity. The measure of charity gives the measure of glory. Here we have a part; in heaven, the union bursts with full glory. The culminating appeal of the book is to all priests to preach this sublime mystery.

I do not know of any other work of Cardinal Mercier which so intimately reveals the faith and purpose within him. Most lay readers will be repelled by its theology and technicality, but for the one who is not, the reading will be rewarding. Certain pages are rhapsodical, like those of the psalmist, some are aglow with the zeal of the churchman as he expounds the structure and end of the one divinely ordained and universal church; some are admonitive, like those of the apostles; others, like those of the saintly Thomas of the middle ages, present the

principles of scholastic philosophy as furnishing the only acceptable and complete explanation of life; many are just the very human heart to heart talks of one friend with other, about their common experiences and hopes, the communings of the good shepherd with his flock. But whatever its content, on each page burns the clear flame of love for man and God, and of complete consecration to service in that love. The dogma may die; indeed, part of it is even to-day the despair of many a modernist within the church itself. But love will not die. And one feels that the Cardinal's letters must continue to be a spring of living water from which succeeding generations of priests will drink to their soul's refreshment.

CHAPTER VI

THE CARDINAL VERSUS THE GOVERNOR GENERAL

One of the most amazing, and to the general public most baffling, phases of the mentality of the German during the war, was his continued attempt to justify his continued ruthless behavior by argument. "Why," asked the bewildered witnessing peoples, "does he stop to reason about an act, which he performs with unhesitating brutality whenever it suits his purpose?"

The truth is that the Germans did not like to do what they did in invading Belgium; they were always ready to, but they preferred to give their action a form, they tried to have a reason. So with curious intent they paved their devastating path with argument.

But they chose a particularly bad place in which to argue when they selected Malines. With the King and the Government gone, they

recognized, from the outset, in Cardinal Mercier the incarnation of the national spirit. But here was one of the keenest brains in the whole of Europe, one of the most eloquent and convincing voices. Even had they had some fraction of right on their side they would have found it impossible to make that fraction conceal from the brilliant prelate the whole great wrong; and since they had none, they were doomed from the start to defeat.

It is practically impossible for anyone who has not lived through it, to objectify the German occupation of Belgium. The neutral ministers, the American, Dutch and Spanish representatives, remained, but they had no governing authority. Their labor on behalf of the oppressed millions was prodigious, their accomplishment great; but they were not a government, and as neutrals they were not supposed to be the voice of the Belgian people. The Germans permitted them to remain because they wished to reassure the people as to their purpose, hoping always, incredible as it

Cardinal versus Governor General

may seem to you, to win them to their side.

The great Belgian *Comité National*, the native relief committee, came nearer to being a government. They, with the aid of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, kept the imprisoned 7,000,000 alive. But since the very life of the population depended on their succor, and since the agreements under which they were allowed to act as a national relief committee demanded a certain enforced discretion which was a virtual neutrality, they could not with any freedom express the attitude of the people. The men who broke this observance, who did speak out, soon found themselves in the position of being no longer able to speak to anyone.

There was only one organization that could become the voice of the Belgian people, and that was the church; for while the Invader did not for an hour exempt it from his rule, yet he dared not lay hands on it as he did on the other members of the national body. Furthermore, the Cardinal, as Primate of Belgium,

the Shepherd of his flock, had, from the beginning, taken the position that the enemy must treat with him on questions affecting the well-being of that flock. Directly after the fall of Antwerp, in October, 1915, he asked Baron von Huene, Governor of Antwerp, for assurances that civilians would not be deported, and later he had the favorable response he received from von Huene, confirmed by Baron von der Goltz, the Governor-General at Brussels preceding Baron von Bissing. In a subsequent letter to Governor-General von Bissing, regarding the deportation of Belgian workmen, he refers back to these early beginnings of the running fight, which was to cover four years, as follows:

MALINES, 19 October, 1916.

Monsieur The Governor-General:

The day after the capitulation of Antwerp, the terrified population asked themselves what would become of the Belgians of the age to bear arms and of those who should reach that age before the end of the occupation. The supplications of fathers and mothers of families determined me to question the Governor of Antwerp, Baron von Huene, who was good enough to reassure me,

Cardinal versus Governor General

and to authorize me to reassure, in his name, the agonized parents. In the meantime rumors had reached Antwerp, that at Liège, Namur, and Charleroi, young men had been arrested and carried by force into Germany. I therefore asked the Governor, M. von Huene, to be good enough to confirm in writing the guaranty which he had already given me verbally, to the effect that nothing similar would occur at Antwerp.

He replied immediately that the rumors regarding the deportations were unfounded, and without hesitating, sent me among other written declarations, the following: Young men need have no fear that they will be taken to Germany, either to be enrolled in the army, or to be employed there in forced labor.

This declaration, written and signed, was publicly communicated to the clergy and faithful of the province of Antwerp, as your Excellency can ascertain from the enclosed document (date 16th October, 1914), which was read aloud in all the churches of the province.

These were the beginnings of the great struggle between the Primate and the conqueror, and they show the early recognition of Malines as a seat of national power. The main battle, however, did not open until 1915, when Baron von Bissing was Governor-General, and the clever and unscrupulous Baron von der Lancken, political head of the occupy-

ing powers. These men, whose arguments represented the combined efforts of the most conspicuous intellects associated with them, turned their biggest guns on Malines. But they suffered from two handicaps: they were never able to find solid ground on which to mount these guns, nor could they match in ammunition, or in skill, the Cardinal's defense. From the beginning, he took the stand that the Germans in invading Belgium had violated the principles of justice and honor, and that therefore everything they did to the Belgian people as a result of this invasion, was unlawful. This position was unassailable, and in every attempt to storm it the enemy was worsted;—as the Cardinal was always certain he would be. He got a kind of compensation for his burden of labor and sorrow in his delight in answering the German's specious reasoning, in tearing from it the veils of hypocrisy and in revealing its subterfuges. Last Christmas at Malines when he told me of an approaching edition of the correspondence of the German authorities with

Cardinal versus Governor General

himself and his letters to them, he said with a chuckle: "And I believe they will furnish reading *assez amusant*!"

Of this historic volume of discussion between Brussels and Malines, by far the most important part passed directly between Cardinal Mercier and Governor-General von Bissing, during the period from the first day of 1915 until the death of the Governor-General in the Spring of 1917. And of the letters covering this period there are two outstanding groups: the "Patriotism and Endurance" series, and the "Deportation" series.

One wishes history might have had a photograph of these opponents side by side,—of the old man of Germany and the man of God—a visible expression of the two forces whose conflict was shaking the pillars of the world. We have no such photograph, but we have something better; for in two of his inimitable cameos Mr. Whitlock's artist's hand has chiseled them for all time. In his story of the Belgian occupation he records this impression

of the German Governor: "General Baron von Bissing, was a man over 70 years of age, old and thin, with thick graying black hair brushed straight back from his forehead and plastered down as with water or with oil on the curiously shaped head that was so straight and sheer behind. His face was hard and its leathern skin, wrinkled and old and weather-beaten, was remorselessly shaved as to chin and throat and high lean cheeks, leaving the thick heavy mustaches of a Prussian Reiter to hide somewhat the thin lips of the stern mouth and then flow on, growing across his cheeks to bristle up fiercely by his ears. His brow was high and the lean face tapered to the wedge of a very firm jaw; the visage of an old Prussian dragoon of the school and mentality of Bismarck. But out of it there gleamed a pair of piercing dark eyes that seemed black until one saw that they were blue; they were keen, shrewd eyes, not wholly unkind. He wore, ceremoniously, a great heavy sabre that clanked against his thin legs as he walked stiffly

Cardinal versus Governor General

into the salon, until, as by an habitual gesture, he grasped its hilt in his aged hand."

Beside this we may place his picture of the Cardinal: "He entered, advanced, tall and strong and spare, in the long black soutane with the red piping and the sash, not with the stately, measured pace that one associates with the red hat, but with long, quick strides, kicking out with impatience the skirt of his soutane before him as he walked, as though it impeded his movements. He was impressive in his height and he bent slightly forward with an effect of swooping on, like an avenging justice. But his hand was outheld, and in his mobile countenance and kindly eyes there was a smile, as of sweetness and light, that illumined the long, lean visage. . . . His hands were large and powerful and of the weathered aspect of his face. It was a countenance full of serene light, with little of the typically ecclesiastical about it: a high brow, a long nose, lean cheeks, strong jaw, and a large, mobile mouth, humorous and sensitive—the mouth of the orator,

but thin lips that could close in impenetrable silence. The eyes were blue and they twinkled with a lively intelligence and kindly humor . . . had it not been for those touches of red in his black garb, he would have recalled some tall, gaunt, simple, affectionate Irish priest, whose life was passed in obscure toil among the poor."

So they appeared to the man who had the extraordinary experience of being the neutral arbitrator on the field where their long battle was waged.

It may be added without indiscretion that Mr. Whitlock, although of perfectly correct official behavior as "neutral arbitrator" was in the eyes of all Belgians their beloved sympathizer, their trusted guide, counsellor and friend, their tower of strength in a land where all the towers of their own building were in ruins. All Belgians came to him with their personal troubles: all went out from his doors comforted and with new confidence. All happenings in Belgium were in his sight, and

Cardinal versus Governor General

many of these happenings included his participation. In his book he has told the story of Belgium's trial by fire once and for all time.

The "Patriotism and Endurance" episode opened on New Year's Day, 1915, with the reading of the pastoral letter in the churches. The effect, as we have seen, was tremendous, and all efforts of the Germans to stem the tide of feeling were futile. I have already referred to the arrest of the printer, M. Dessain, at two o'clock on the morning following the first reading, and to the invasion of the Cardinal's palace at six, and also to the hysterical activity of that and subsequent days, during which officers rushed about the churches, demanding copies of the letter, seizing them by force, or arresting the priests who refused to deliver them. In all cases they prohibited any further readings—the length of the pastorals usually demanded several consecutive services for a complete reading. The Brussels censorship office was visibly the center of the enemy excitement, and there leaked out from it, to

the delight of the people, reports of the great anger of the Governor-General. Evidently the reply to the document he had written December 31, 1914, and delivered to His Eminence at six o'clock on the morning of January second, had not softened his anger.

In that document he had stressed three points. First, he highly disapproved of a letter His Eminence had asked him to transmit to Cardinal Hartmann of Cologne, and he returned it to Malines. This letter, he said, proved that he had been deceived when he believed there could be satisfactory relations between His Eminence and himself. It had been, indeed, definitely with the intent of disabusing the Governor-General's mind of any such hope that the Cardinal had sent him a letter addressed to Cardinal von Hartmann, in which he unequivocally outlined his position. Because of that which this letter revealed, the Governor-General announced, he withdrew the favor he had accorded the Cardinal in allowing him to enter into

Cardinal versus Governor General

relations with the other bishops of Belgium.

In the second place, since it fomented difficulties and rebellion, he strictly forbade any further reading or dissemination of the Christmas pastoral. And in the third place, he demanded to know how His Eminence had been able to connect with the King of England and to suggest a day of prayer for the Allies.

The Cardinal, as we know, spent the entire day in replying to the voluminous German communication. He dismissed the announcement of the withdrawal of the permission to visit his bishops outside his diocese, by saying that he had not availed himself of it. He refused to withdraw his order for the reading of the pastoral letter, or to retract any single statement in it. And he met the demand that he explain this means of connecting with the King of England with the statement that he presumed that his private life could not be controlled by a censorship of any kind whatever, and that he would later send the Governor-General a letter of Cardinal Bourne of Eng-

land, of which he had several copies, in which the English prelate announced the decision of the King to prescribe a day of prayer.

Von Bissing was furious — Von der Lancken went to Malines the following day, but obtained nothing. And each day they received further news of the sensation the letter was making abroad. On January 10th, they printed an article in one of the controlled Brussels papers stating that outside press reports were inexact, and asserting that they had not in any way interfered with the liberty of the Cardinal in the exercise of his ecclesiastical functions! At the same time the Governor-General sent to priests of the diocese of Malines a notice to the effect that the Cardinal had declared to the Governor-General that he had no intention of exciting the population by his letter, that he had particularly insisted on the necessity of their obedience to the occupying powers, and that he did not require of his clergy the continued reading of the remainder of the letter, nor that it be distributed.

Cardinal versus Governor General

The Doyon of Ste. Gudule, Mgr. Evrard, went at once to Malines, and on the 9th wrote a letter to his curés, which followed on the heels of the Governor-General's note, in which he quoted the Cardinal's explicit denial of the German statement. "Neither in speaking or writing have I withdrawn any of my former instructions, and I protest against the violence done to the liberty of my pastoral ministry." The churches were crowded to overflowing; everywhere the reading of the pastoral continued. On the 11th the Cardinal addressed a letter in Latin to the members of his own diocese in which he enumerated the enemy acts interfering with his office as bishop. And so the battle progressed, with no question in the minds of those inside or outside the occupied territory as to where the victory rested. But though morally and actually defeated, the Germans characteristically kept up the show of what they tried to make appear a winning fight, continuing their arrests of those caught selling or distributing the letter, and their

persecution of the clergy who promulgated it.

And the Cardinal valiantly continued to write letters to his flock. The Lenten epistle on the Papaey was followed on the 25th of April by "Devotion to Christ," on the 21st of September by "A Call to Prayer," and on the 15th of October by "All Saints Day," in which, with his customary brilliancy, he examined the problems of evil and suffering. It was on November 23rd, just about a month after the appearance of this letter, that the Governor-General went himself to Malines for a personal interview with the Primate, during which he naively asked why His Eminence complained, when his liberty was complete. Had he not been given a permit to circulate freely in his automobile?

"Have I entire freedom of action," the Cardinal replied, "when I am under the incessant surveillance of spies? In Malines the least of my gestures is spied upon. The most insignificant of my words is noted down. If I go to Brussels, I am followed everywhere.

Cardinal versus Governor General

If I decide to go even for a few hours to my country place at Lhermite, I scarcely reach the village before I see myself followed by spies. Sometimes soldiers on horseback accompany me to my door, and stop near it to question those who come to see me, and those who leave my house. . . . Do you call this being at liberty?" The Governor-General did not score by his personal visit.

After a year of futile bombardment of Malines, what an extraordinary circumstance was this visit! During the year, each successive stroke of His Eminence had but thrown into sharper relief the clear, true lines of his conviction, and yet the old man of Germany clung tenaciously to the belief that sooner or later he could talk him into submission. There was no such talking going on at Charleville, at the military headquarters of the enemy government, no such continued attempt to produce proof for the rightness of the wrong; it was distinctly General von Bissing, head of the civil forces, who was responsible for the argu-

ing policy. One of those Germans who never questioned the doctrine of the right of the strongest to control, he was quite genuinely convinced that his country had a right, perhaps a holy duty, to take over Belgium, and he was positive he could prove this in the end. And toward the end, that is, the end of his own life, after over two years of his reasoning had not yet convinced the blind Belgians, he was almost pathetic in his attitude of baffled incomprehension. I have often heard it said that the Belgians killed von Bissing. At least it is probable that by their adamant refusal to be argued or cajoled or lured into accepting him as the benevolent patriarch arrived to rule over them only for their good, they did hasten his death.

On the day following the visit to Malines the Cardinal began the writing of one of the most sensational papers that appeared during the entire war—the “Appeal to Truth,” a strongly documented letter from the Bishops of Belgium to the Cardinals and Bishops of

Cardinal versus Governor General

Germany, Bavaria, and Austria-Hungary, in which after a masterly placing of guilt where it belonged, he appealed to them, as he had three times previously appealed to the occupying authorities, to obtain from their government a court of Arbitration for Belgium.

About this time, the question of permission for the Primate's journey to Rome was brought up, and remained the storm center of the Malines-Brussels relations until the departure of His Eminence, on January 16, 1916, for the Eternal City.

Simultaneously with his departure copies of the letter to the clergy of the Central Powers began appearing clandestinely in Brussels. The Germans were now beyond trying to conceal their anger. Von Bissing wrote swiftly an uncontrolled note to the Bishop of Tournai, in which, among other things, he asserted that in any question of truth, there could be no hesitation between accepting the word of a German general as against the oath of a Belgian bishop, and that if now at last the Pope did

not intervene, the Germans would surely act!

The Governor-General undoubtedly hoped that the Primate would return from Rome a chastened spirit. He was to suffer another disillusionment. Cardinal Mercier came back, and on March 12, wrote the clearly unchastened lenten Pastoral, "My Return from Rome." To this the stubborn old man not only replied in a letter to His Eminence, but he also printed his reply in one of the controlled Brussels papers — again to the delight of the keen-witted populace, who, in these days of somber inquietude had so little to cheer them. He said, in part, "To safeguard the interests of the Catholic church, the Pope assured me formally and with frequent repetitions, that on your return from Rome your Eminence would assume an attitude full of moderation. As a result I expected that your Eminence would abstain from manifestations which throw disarray into the spirit of the Belgian people, so easily excitable. With this expectation, I waited to discuss with your

Cardinal versus Governor General

Eminence the incidents provoked by your journey and notably the letter of the Belgian bishops and the political abuse which you made of the safe conduct that the Holy Father solicited for you to permit you to go to Rome on a purely ecclesiastical mission.

“Your pastoral letter permits me to say that not only have you not lived up to the agreements that the High Personage was in a better position to give, but furthermore you have conducted yourself in such a manner that your relations with the occupying powers are now more strained than ever. . . .

“I cannot allow that your Eminence, à propos of the end of the war, shall attempt to rouse unfounded hopes, which are contrary to facts.”

Thus 1916 got under way.

I have already referred to the brilliant sermon delivered in Sainte Gudule, and the accompanying manifestation on July 21. The Governor-General had had good reason to announce that the relations between Malines

and the occupying power were more strained than ever!

But if the Cardinal had felt it his duty to speak out before, he felt it a hundred fold his duty to speak in the fall of 1916. For then the Invader was initiating the most cruel of all the infamous occupation policies,—the deportation of Belgians into Germany for forced labor in factories or for work behind the lines. And the brave millions who had so unflinchingly met hunger and cold, and devastation and death, were sunk in a pit of despair. After all they had endured, the yoke of human slavery in its most humiliating form was being fastened on their necks. And to add to the hideousness of his latest thrust at the soul of the nation, the perpetrator sought again to invest it with a show of legality in trying to force each victim to sign a “voluntary employment” contract. Those of us who have seen the men torn from their wives and children and started along the tracks in open cattle cars, in bitter weather, toward the unseen horror, and

Cardinal versus Governor General

heard the immortal cry, "We will not sign," echoing back to us across the desolated land, and who later saw the return of groups of these victims, against whom even the slave-driver felt it useless to struggle further, whose legs were blackened by snow torture or whose bodies were emaciated and broken by the agony of hunger and disease—for those of us who saw any of this, it is still impossible to look back without a sense of physical, as well as spiritual, illness.

Yes, now as never before the flock had need of its shepherd. Their faith in him was not betrayed; on October 19, Baron von Bissing received the first letter of protest from Malines. This was its concluding paragraph:

"In the name of the Belgian citizen's right to choose his residence and work; in the name of the inviolability of family life; in the name of those moral interests so gravely compromised by the practise of deportation; in the name, too, of the undertaking given by the Governor of the province of Antwerp and by

the Governor-General himself, who directly represent the highest authority in the German Empire, I respectfully beg you to withdraw the orders regarding forced labor and deportation issued to the working-men of Belgium, and also to send back to their homes such of them as have already been carried away in this manner. Your Excellency will easily understand how heavy would be the weight of my responsibility towards the families of these men, if the faith they placed in you, on account of my intervention and my urgent representations to them, were now so lamentably betrayed." On the same day the Cardinal wrote to Baron von der Lancken, General von Bisping's chief adviser: "I earnestly hope that you will use all your influence with those in authority to prevent such an outrage.

"Do not speak, I entreat you, of the need of safeguarding public order, or of the necessity of lightening the burden upon public charity. Spare us such bitter irony. You know well that public order is in no way threat-

Cardinal versus Governor General

ened and that our moral and civilian influences would be placed spontaneously at your disposal, if there were any such danger. The unemployed are not a charge upon official relief; and no help comes to them from any financial arrangements which you may make."

A paragraph from the Governor-General's reply reveals the odious evasion characterizing the whole.

"In his letter Your Eminence invokes the high ideal of familial virtues. I may be permitted to reply that, like your Eminence, I place this ideal very high, but for that very reason I must say also that the working classes run the very great risk of completely losing all ideals if the present state of affairs which can but become worse, continues. For laziness is the family's worst enemy. Surely the man who works far away from his folk — a state of affairs which has existed always for the Belgian workman — contributes much more to the welfare of his family than by remaining at home in idleness. Workmen accepting work in

Germany are permitted to remain in relation with their families. At regular intervals they will be allowed leaves to return to their country. They may take their families to Germany, where they will find priests acquainted with the languages."

There was no more honesty in the whole than in this part. In beginning and closing von Bissing placed the blame for the economic and social necessity of the deportation system at the door of England—it is her blockade that makes it necessary—if Belgium suffers, England is to blame, not Germany.

Knowing that fear was eating every day deeper into the heart of a desperate people, Cardinal Mercier determined to break through the prison wall and reach the conscience of the world outside. On November 7th, 1916, he wrote "An Appeal to Neutrals," in which he listed examples of the outrages perpetrated, and tore to shreds the sophism of the German justification of them, concluding with impassioned appeal:

Cardinal versus Governor General

“We, the shepherds of those sheep who are torn from us by brutal force, full of anguish at the thought of the moral and religious isolation in which they are about to languish, impotent witnesses of the grief and terror in the numerous homes shattered or threatened, turn to souls believing or unbelieving, in Allied countries, in neutral countries, and even in enemy countries, who have respect for human dignity.”

Those dead days of November—shall I ever be able to forget them? Each week the shoulders of the little groups of Belgians in their worn black coats, meeting in the late afternoon under the leafless trees on the boulevard, to exchange words of greeting or comfort, seemed to droop a little lower. Though the unquenchable fire still burned in the eye, the body simply could not hold itself upright under its burden of misery. And the angle of the enemy silhouette as he passed these little groups seemed, in contrast, increasingly erect and arrogant. Poor, poor people, all together

we were so powerless to help them; Mr. Whitlock was positively ill; our C. R. B. men were all but breaking under the strain. Mr. Tuck, stationed at Mons, where some of the worst outrages occurred, left everything, and rushed out and across Holland and the Channel to England to join the British army and fight his way back to Mons to put an end in the one way possible to the horrors he had witnessed. And it was all that Mr. Hoover and the Director in Brussels could do to keep others from following Tuck.

On November 10, the Cardinal addressed his second letter to Baron von Bissing in which he again showed Germany's violation of recorded promises, and asking if it were just to avenge a grievance against England on an inoffensive and disarmed people, thrust forward boldly the naked fact behind the whole monstrous procedure: "Each Belgian workman will liberate a German workman, who will add one more soldier to the German army."

In two weeks, came the second reply of the

Cardinal versus Governor General

Governor-General, which did little more, however, than repeat the substance of his first.

Toward the close of the month when the Cardinal preached in Sainte Gudule to those under the shadow of slavery, from the text: "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free," he said:

"The last four or five weeks have been perhaps the most sorrowful in all my life. . . . For three days—from morning till evening, I went about those neighborhoods from which the first laborers and artisans in my diocese were forcibly taken away into a land of exile. I visited more than a hundred half-empty homes. The husband was away, the children were orphans, the sisters were sitting there with dull eyes and listless arms, beside their sewing-machines, and a dreary silence reigned in all these cottages. One would have said a corpse was in the house. . . .

"Faithful to the salutation that is familiar to bishops: '*Pax vobis*, peace be with you,' I bring you a message of peace.

“ But no peace is possible without order, and order rests upon justice and charity.

“ We desire order, and for that reason we asked you, from the first, to oppose no active resistance to the occupying power, and to submit, without rebellion, to regulations that do not violate either your conscience as Christians or your dignity as patriots. But the occupying power too must desire order — that is to say, the respect of our own rights and of the engagements it has given. In civilized countries man has a right to liberty in the choice of work. He has a right to his home. He has the right to reserve his services for his own country.

“ Any regulations that in any way violate these rights are not binding on the conscience.

“ This I say to you, my Brethren, without hatred or thoughts of retaliation. I should be unworthy of this episcopal ring, placed by the church upon my finger, unworthy of this cross placed by her upon my heart, were I to hesi-

Cardinal versus Governor General

tate, in obedience to any human passion, to proclaim that right violated is none the less right, and that injustice supported by force is still injustice. . . .

“Courage, then, my Brethren, be respectful to the teaching of Christ. Be faithful to your Belgian land.”

Only one day remained of that dread November, and the Cardinal wearily, but bravely still, made a final statement to the man who will be forever remembered as the director of this most infamous chapter in the war. He had but a few months more to live — one wonders whether, if he could have seen the grave so near, he might at the same time have felt a clearing wind blow across his clouded brain — probably not.

“The letter,” the Cardinal wrote, “which Your Excellency did me the honor to write to me, is a great disappointment to me.” He then quotes instances to prove that in the continued recruiting, the clergy were brutally thrust aside, and burgomasters and town coun-

cillors reduced to silence. In a certain commune two families found themselves deprived each of four sons at once. And of the ninety-four deportees from this commune only two were unemployed.

His last paragraph forms a fitting close to this amazing and tragic, perfidious and noble debate, surely one of the most extraordinary in all the range of history.

“At the end of your letter, Your Excellency, you remind me that men belonging to liberal professions are not interfered with. If only the unemployed were removed I could understand this exception. But if all able-bodied men continue to be enrolled indiscriminately, the exception is unjustifiable. It would be iniquitous to make the whole weight of the deportations fall upon the working classes. The middle classes must have their part in the sacrifice, however cruel it may be and just because it is cruel, that the occupying power imposes on the nation. A great many members of my clergy have asked me to beg for them a

Cardinal versus Governor General

place in the van of the persecuted. I register this offer and submit it to you with pride.

“I would wish to believe that the Authorities of the Empire have not said their last word. They will think of our undeserved sorrows, of the reprobation of the civilized world, of the judgment of history, and of the chastisement of God.”

CHAPTER VII

THE CARDINAL AT HOME

I had my last audience at Malines on the first Christmas morning after the Armistice. I started from Brussels on Christmas eve, to spend it with the two charming Dessain sisters, whose brother, a distinguished gentleman and scholar, is one of the Cardinal's closest friends. A soft snow was falling on this first Christmas after the Liberation, as if seeking gently to cover the scars of the bitter years, and the hour's ride from the capital, northward through the white-gleaming fairy-like dusk, seemed all too short. But it was sweet, too, to slip inside the hospitable brick house with its spacious inner court, and to be greeted again with the endearing friendliness that touched us so deeply throughout the war years. We sat down to a frugal supper, prepared by faithful old Mélanie, who had herself held the house against

The Cardinal at Home

the first invading soldiers. Poor Mélanie had had worse troubles than those of defending her kitchen against the Germans. For one day, not long after they had occupied Malines, she set out for the customary morning mass, and reached the church only to find the nave crowded with kneeling figures in the hated enemy gray. And devout though she was, she could not force herself to enter, but went home sadly shaking her puzzled old head. After that Mélanie spent her sympathies not on her people, but on "*le pauvre bon Dieu*," for was it not clear that the poor good God must be having by far the hardest time of all?

After supper we sat in the library a few minutes, while M. Dessain recalled the scene enacted there between two and four o'clock on that January morning in 1915, when the five Germans arrived to arrest him on the charge of having printed the Cardinal's first letter. As we talked, the Abbé Van Nuffel, chapel music-master of the church "*Beyond the Dyle*," the Primate's church, came in out of

the snow, and while we settled nearer the single precious fire, took his place at the piano and struck the beautiful opening chords of the Cesar Franck sonata. From that his fingers wandered off into some lovely Grieg things that held us until after eleven, when all the family except myself (I was prevented by an annoying cough) set out for the midnight mass.

Christmas morning broke deliciously crisp and clear, and we started early for the nine o'clock service at which Monseigneur was again to officiate. It was almost unbelievable, that after all, there still stood the beautiful cathedral; as injury succeeded injury during the terrible years, we had hardly dare hope it might survive. The lovely tower of Saint Rombauld we had always sighted with joy on our trips from Antwerp to Brussels. To be sure there were ugly brick patches filling in the wounds of the nave, shattered glass was unmended, and ruined parts, not vital, were unrepaired. Inside, we found the chapel at

The Cardinal at Home

the right still a wreck; old marble panels leaned against the steps. But the great structure stood, and this morning at the left of the choir was the familiar, joyous manger scene, with the star above the Holy Babe still shining as brightly as if the clouds of no world conflagration had ever obscured its beams of hope, nor the uproar of any world-cataclysm had ever interrupted the continuous music of the first heavenly message of peace and good will.

The choir was dignified and simple. The morning sun shone graciously on the few pots of laurel and sword ferns, on the holy altar, and on the Cardinal's dais of soft red velvet, embroidered in gold. I cannot convey the intimate and moving beauty of this first free Christmas service, nor how truly the tall Cardinal in his magnificent gold and white vestments, as he approached the high altar, seemed a very priest of God. After mass we stood on the sidewalk to watch him, now in scarlet robes and accompanied by six acolytes in black, pass through the street to the palace. What a pic-

ture of old-world beauty and grandeur he represented!

I should have preferred not being received on Christmas morning, knowing how many services His Eminence had to conduct within twenty-four hours, but he himself had said he wished to see me. So about fifteen minutes later I was again entering, with M. Dessain, the door near which Mr. Hoover, my husband, and I had taken leave of the Cardinal, one dark day at the close of 1916. We had been received upstairs, and after a half-hour's review of an increasingly heart-breaking situation, testing all the capacities and courage of men, we had said good-bye before starting for the Holland frontier. It had seemed to me as these men talked that all Belgium was gathered in that little room, where questions concerning the physical and spiritual life and death of its imprisoned millions were put and answered — if they could be. Mr. Hoover and my husband were going out temporarily (though no one was ever sure that the existing relief ar-

The Cardinal at Home

rangement would last) and I for a longer time. It was a sad parting.

As we walked slowly down the staircase, the men ahead, I felt suddenly that someone was following us, and turning my head slightly, caught just the gleam of a bright robe. The men did not see it until we reached the foot of the stairs and were moving across the hall toward the street door; then, they, too, realized that the Cardinal had come after us, and we separated silently into a kind of semicircle to wait for what he might have to say. But he did not open his lips. He stood silently for just a moment at the foot of the ancient staircase, and then simply stretched out his hands in a mute gesture at once of appeal and farewell. The American men were biting their lips to hold back the tears; the Belgian did not try. He turned the knob of the door and as we slipped out into the street, he said, "That has never happened before."

Just two years had passed since that day, years of ever-deepening tragedy for Belgium,

during which the Cardinal had fought with ever greater courage to save his people from despair and defeat. Always he battled with the vigor of a young man; he lived austere, sustained by spiritual bread.

This Christmas morning I passed again along the corridor which looks on the inner gardens of the archiepiscopal palace, where green growing things spell out the verse from the Canticle of the children in the fiery furnace, *Benedicite germinantia Domina*, All growing things bless the Lord. We crossed the imposing audience chamber with its shell-torn ceiling to the small informal reception room that I so vividly remembered, with its beautiful ivory crucifix, the few oil paintings, and the photograph of our American Minister, Mr. Brand Whitlock, on the console. Here we were received. I find in my diary after that visit, noting the very human side of the Cardinal, the words, "informality, friendliness, boyish pleasure in amusing anecdote, humor."

The Cardinal at Home

In our conversation I tried to express a little of America's debt to His Eminence as spiritual leader of the oppressed forces of right, a little of how much Belgium and his personal exemplification of what she stood for helped us, so far away, to understand the issues of the war. He followed thoughtfully, remarking at the end that King George had recently said much the same thing, for England. I then told him how our people, Catholic and non-Catholic, alike, acclaimed him. "I think I find," he said, "in this sympathy and friendship of America an evidence of God's approval of a right action. In the beginning I had to consider that in denouncing prelates in the countries that oppressed us who acted contrary to justice, I might be furnishing a weapon for radicals against my own church. They who are against us and would destroy us would be quick to say, 'You see that one inside acknowledges the wrong within his church.' But I reasoned that it was not for me to question the result in a matter so clearly

one of justice and duty. And God has proved I was right."

M. Dessain smiled at me. He had often told me that the Cardinal had been very happy in the tribute of understanding friendship that came to him from our country.

"But you will now plan to visit those friends in America?" I urged. He smiled boyishly, "But do you think I should, when I do not know English sufficiently well? At least you," he turned to M. Dessain, "will have to accompany me as interpreter. You, as advocate, will very appropriately pronounce my discourses!"

"Yes, I wish to go," he continued. "I wish chiefly to go to thank America for her great gift of sympathy and understanding. And I wish very particularly to thank her for her interest in the re-building of the library of Louvain. That library is the child of my heart. Besides there are many other reasons."

And so we talked on for more than an hour that Christmas morning. I felt several times that I should somehow have been able to pre-

The Cardinal at Home

vent a too-generous giving of time, but evidently His Eminence wished to talk and he wished me to talk quite frankly. I was bold enough to say that many have felt that during this war the Catholic church failed to seize one of the greatest opportunities in its history, that if it could have taken a step freely forward, sloughing off many of the trappings unessential to spiritual life, that bind it to the past, freeing itself once and for all of a certain type of temporal ambition, we might at least have had the great universal church for which the world still waits. The Cardinal was patient in explaining how the Church admits of liberty and growth within, though from the outside it may appear not to. "But there is one thing that can never change," and his face was suffused with a passionate earnestness as he spoke, "all Catholics rest always in the belief in the divine revelation of the Scriptures and in the divinely ordained apostolic succession. No, there remains the unbridgeable gulf on this point of doctrine," he smiled, "that cannot

change. The best we can do as Catholics and non-Catholics is to seek our points of union, our common beliefs, and while recognizing the unalterable difference between us, to meet on those common grounds. In this way we shall yet work together for the glory of God."

We turned for a few minutes to the pamphlets and books on the table, and to friendly questionings and well-wishing. And I went away with Christmas gifts of books and an autographed photograph. And I wondered, as I walked again past the peaceful snow-covered gardens, how this great man, overwhelmed with world burdens, could give to so many—for I was but one of those who through the years have been the recipients of his beautiful hospitality—so generously. And then I remembered that he said once, in a letter to his priests, "It is not enough to give what one has, if one is not disposed also to give what one is."

CHAPTER VIII

AFTER THE ARMISTICE—THE VISIT TO AMERICA

One of the first questions asked by the few strangers lucky enough to get into Brussels during those tremendous days immediately following the armistice, was: "Where is Cardinal Mercier?" "Can we see His Eminence?" They wished to offer him their tribute of admiration and homage; the road to Malines was a way of pilgrimage. The Cardinal had, too, a rewarding share in the triumph of November 22nd, the never to be forgotten home-coming day of the King and Queen.

I followed the preparations for that day with an emotion approaching that of the Belgians themselves. It was sweet to see them—before the sodden, loot-laden retreating army of the occupying powers had well cleared the city limits—forgetful of their hunger and

misery, hurriedly set to work to scrape the moss of four years from the stones in front of the royal palace, throw open and brush up and rake over the pretty park from which they had so long been barred, dig deep pits for bright banner standards, and erect pedestals for commemorative statues wherever they could. The entire populace turned feverishly to scrubbing and disinfecting and beautifying, to cleanse the city of pollution and make it fit for the return of the exiles. And by November 22nd, they had finished, and with smiles and tears and flags and flowers they cried their welcome to their beloved Albert and Elizabeth.

I watched it all from a balcony of the Department of Foreign Affairs, caught in the tide of emotion that surged over the multitude that since dawn and even through the night had packed the walks and parks and leaned from the roofs and trees, tensely waiting. The blue day, dropped by the grace of God into the end of a drear November, furnished a background of exquisite and poignant beauty for

After the Armistice

the triumphal pageant, as, heralded by the glad national air unheard in the capital since four years, the King on his bay and the Queen on her white horse, with their children beside them, rounded the corner of the Rue de la Loi, and following the street-aisle left free by the tearful, cheering thousands, approached the parliament buildings. For their brave escort of thirty thousand allied soldiers, this was the first fruit of success; they were bringing back to their own the Soldier-King and the Queen-Nurse. Battle-tested, scarred, and stern these soldiers looked, under the soft blue sky, but there was also the joy of victory in their faces and in their marching, and chrysanthemums blossomed from many a pommel and gun-barrel.

After the review in front of the Parliament Buildings, we went into the historic chamber where the representatives of the nation were gathered to hear the home-coming speech of their King. These were the men, who on August 2, 1914, had upheld his hand when, in

answer to the German threat, he raised the sword. Outside, the outposts of emotion were beyond the beflagged façades and the wide vistas of tree-lined boulevards and parks, somewhere off in the stretches of blue November air and sky. In the Chamber, emotion was concentrated within four walls; words cannot convey its intensity.

The King and Queen and their children entered, followed by General Leman, the defender of Liège, by Burgomaster Max, the neutral ministers, the Directors of the National Relief Committee, a group of allied officers, brilliant in ribbons and medals, and most conspicuous among them all, the Primate of Belgium, whose flaming robe seemed, on that day, a very garment of victory.

As the nation's law-makers, freely assembled once more after the long rule of brute force, watched their stalwart, calm-eyed King, in simple field uniform, quietly mount the rostrum above which the echoes of the immortal words — "A country that defends itself im-

After the Armistice

poses itself on the respect of all, that country will not perish" — still lingered, they did not attempt to conceal their tears. On his face, as on their own, was written the suffering of the four years.

The manly Prince Leopold stood beside his father. And Queen Elizabeth, looking frail and tired, but very lovely in her soft tan habit and mantle, after stopping for a word of greeting with His Eminence, crossed the Chamber to the velvet-canopied platform at the right of the rostrum. She was attended by the Comtess de Grunne and a lady in waiting; and the adored little Princess Marie-José, Prince Charles-Theodore, and their royal visitor, the second son of King George, sat with her.

The company of honored guests crowded every foot of space at the opposite side of the room; first among them, standing just next to the rostrum, was Cardinal Mercier, with Mr. Solvay, Belgium's most widely known philanthropist, and Burgomaster Max beside him. In no other country was the Great Deliverance

vizualized in a more impressive and significant scene than this. And as we looked and listened, our eyes turned from the khaki-clad Soldier-King to the scarlet-robed soldier of the Church, and then back again to the King. This was the King's day, but to all it seemed fitting that the Primate should stand near him.

When Parliament assembled a second time to express the nation's gratitude to the neutral ministers who had chosen to remain in the invaded territory and fight their own fight with neutral weapons, in the most extraordinary situation in which diplomats ever found themselves, His Eminence was again the most striking figure on the floor. And Mr. Whitlock, in responding to an address, delicately deflected the praise intended for himself and his country to Belgium, directing it to the King and Queen and their soldiers, and to the weaponless heroes of Inside and their General, the Cardinal. This created an opening for such enthusiastic applause of the powerful Catholic leader, even by his political rivals,

After the Armistice

that he was obliged to rise to it. His mere silent acknowledgment was impressive.

Indeed, His Eminence spent almost as much time in Brussels as in Malines, during these days. He officiated at the solemn and splendid thanksgiving mass at Sainte Gudule. He spoke, too, at the Conference called to review, before their majesties, the relief work that saved Belgium's children. One special meeting followed another, and usually he was present.

Nor was he absent from those other purely social functions in which the Bruxellois now bravely began trying to gather up the threads of their pre-war days. Happily, his spirituality, conspicuous and dominating as it is among all his characteristics, does not preclude the possession of an unusual charm of simple humanness and a delightful social grace and delicate sense of humor. These possessions make him a figure of almost fascinating attractiveness in any gathering which he attends. I remember the first reception at the Spanish

Legation, where, though there had been no thought of fashions for more than four years, women contrived, after unearthing old satins and fans and jewels, to produce the effect, in the Minister's richly appointed rooms, of a very brilliant company. Among these women, certain men were conspicuous. One quickly singled out the tall and elegant Mr. Whitlock, and there were army officers with double rows of decorations, and other diplomats in court dress; but towering above them all, quite the most commanding and picturesque figure in the room, was the Cardinal. Always about him was a pressure of eager listeners, for even on such occasions, where conversation is necessarily fleeting and scattered, the Cardinal's simple direct speech, with its revelation of humanness, is a thing to lose as little of as possible.

During the spring and early summer months there was much talk of the Primate's long-planned trip to the United States. He wished to go to express his personal and his country's

After the Armistice

gratitude for the sustaining sympathy and practical help that had come from across the Atlantic; he wanted also to better organize the enterprises already on foot for the restoration of the library of Louvain; Belgians desired their great man to go as their emissary to carry grateful messages. In June, President Wilson, when he visited Malines, where the Cardinal greeted him as the author of peace, warmly assured him of the welcome awaiting him in our country, strengthening, if that were necessary, his determination to undertake the journey. And as the weeks passed the reasons why he should attempt it multiplied.

About mid-summer, I wrote from California to ask if we might prepare for his visit, and received the following characteristically charming and friendly letter in reply:

MALINES, *1st July, '19.*

Dear Madam:

You have been kind enough to ask through the courtesy of the Belgian Minister to the United States, if I have the hope to make a visit to your compatriots.

Mercier

To speak of hope is to say too little. So far as I am concerned my decision is made, and if nothing unexpected occurs to cut across my plans I shall have the joy to arrive about mid-September and to pass the month of October in the New World.

A few weeks passed on that soil of great initiatives and powerful achievements, will give back to me, I am confident, a little of the vigor of youth in an hour when the task seems laborious and very heavy for aging shoulders.

I shall try to translate the gratitude of Belgium toward your Great Republic, notably for the creation of the admirable Commission for Relief in Belgium, to which you yourself have been so generously devoted. And I hope to carry away on my return a part of the moral comfort which the fecund energy of the United States diffuses throughout the world.

Accept, dear Madam, with my grateful souvenir of your good visit to Malines, our respectful and devoted homage,

S. J. CARD. MERCIER,
Arch. de Malines.

Cardinal Mercier embarked at Brest on September 3, 1919, on the transport *Northern Pacific* and landed in New York Harbor, September 9th. Among others attending him as secretaries and friends, was M. Francis Des-

After the Armistice

sain of Malines, printer of the Christmas pastoral, whose interesting experience in connection with it is described in an earlier chapter.

délivré et d'aprice importé en retour une part
des réconfort moral que l'événement a
fourni. Unis regard sur le monde.

Ayez, cher Madame, avec mon souvenir
l'honneur de votre bonne ville à Malines;
nos hommages respectueux et dévoués.

J. D. D. (card. Marin, évêque de Malines).

Mrs. Kellogg, Secrétaire de l'Institut des Etats Unis
pour la Commission for Relief in Belgium.

We did not need to be urged to prepare a fitting welcome for the Belgian priest. We had begun to prepare it five years ago, when the nation's idealism, staggering under the horror of

the initial war-thrusts, first sighted the austere figure of the patriot-prelate, standing fearless and immovable, at the very point where barbarism had broken through the defenses of civilization, and heard him pronouncing his clarion arraignment of wrong and declaring his unshakable faith in the ultimate triumph of divine justice. Other men were saying brave things and doing brave things, but the people wanted spiritual leadership. They found it there on the frontier of Germany. Human evolution, as understood by us, although the biologist may not wish to try to explain it, involves the insistent and persistent necessity of spiritual ideals and direction. We have wanted it, and we always will want it. That we want it to-day is one explanation of our unprecedented reception to the militant Cardinal.

His own words best reveal the ardour and simplicity of his spirit as he came to meet us. "I have come to thank America for what she has done for Belgium," he said first, and then,

After the Armistice

“On the evening of my landing here, on my meeting you, your civil, military, and religious authorities, in your marvelous harbor, and while traversing your immense avenue, I felt overwhelmed by emotion; I was indeed living one of the most solemn hours of my life.”

A cause always gains if in personal appearance its protagonist pleases the public eye, and the cause of faith and justice has been especially fortunate. Everywhere, the Cardinal's nobility of countenance and carriage have caught the attention and admiration of those who saw him. He seems clothed in a garment of spirituality and power; and concretely and strikingly visible, are those other picturesque garments of his office, the flowing soutane, the broad black beaver hat and the scarlet ceremonial robes, that have made him a marked man wherever he went.

This historic visit has two important aspects: what we said to the Cardinal and what the Cardinal said to us. We said many things to him, some exaggerated, some naive, but all

inspired by genuine conviction and feeling. He was greeted with such affectionate newspaper headlines as "Hearts Ajar for Mercier," "Already Love Him," "Will Never be Forgotten," "Welcome to Belgium's Great Hero-Priest," above fervent and extended tributes of admiration and friendship, from which I quote three or four illustrative sentences:

"The Cardinal's fidelity and courage have made a profound impression the world over — nowhere more so than in the United States. Already our people love him. They are eager to greet him as a true champion of freedom, a true servant of humanity and faith."

"To the people of this country Cardinal Mercier is more than a personality; he is an institution. When his people were crushed under the iron heel of German military rule, his voice alone was heard around the world in protest. His courage was compelling. It made of him a world figure. He revitalized the whole church — Protestant and Catholic — throughout America and the Continent. There

After the Armistice

is scarcely a Protestant pulpit in America that has not sounded his praise."

"Cardinal Mercier kept the Belgian conscience clear and the national consciousness alert. It was he who branded the lie upon the royal forehead, when, backed by overwhelming evidence, he issued his flaming and fearless 'Appeal to Truth.' . . . This is the patriot and man whom America welcomes to-day; and she never welcomed a braver, a nobler, a more worthy guest. Ecclesiastically, he is a prince of the Church. Humanly, he is a prince of faith so triumphant that unbelief itself may well afford to give him reverence."

"'I have come to thank America for what she has done for Belgium,' were the first words which His Eminence spoke on setting foot on land. Our debt to him is greater than Belgium's debt to us. For he has given to us, as to all the world, a matchless example of moral strength and courage to keep alive our faith in the power of good over evil."

These were among our first words of greet-

ing to His Eminence. During his visit, representatives of our people added addresses of welcome that would fill volumes, in which he was hailed as the leader, who in a moment of gravest peril to all of us, revealed the cause of the Allies to all a world only waiting to be convinced of its righteousness to insure its complete victory. The text of them all can be summed up in a sentence from the speech in New York of the President of the Federated Council of Churches: "You are admired by all because you stand for courage, justice, righteousness, and mercy; you stand for the spiritual basis of this world and the foundation of the spiritual world which is to come."

'And while we talked we acted. The press devoted daily columns to reporting the progress of our guest and photographers collected a veritable gallery illustrating it. School children sang for the protector of the children of Belgium, soldiers marched for him, our people applauded him. Municipalities conferred upon him the title of honorary citizen as they

After the Armistice

wrapped the Stars and Stripes about his venerable shoulders. The National Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church invited him to be their guest and to address them. Students greeted him with more rousing yells than had echoed through their halls in years, while the universities addressed him in Latin (for once knowing themselves understood!) and hung brilliant robes upon him.

In reality, Cardinal Mercier had done his speaking—for God and all of us—before he arrived. We would have been satisfied if, in visiting us, he had done no more than afford us the opportunity to say what we wanted to say to him. But that was far from his own conception of the purpose of his coming. He spoke unwearyingly, often several times a day, telling us how our participation in the war looked, what it meant to those across the Atlantic, interpreting Belgium's gratitude to us.

In his first important address, he said: "America had no territorial, financial, or political interests in the war. Rather was she

bound by her traditional policy to keep herself aloof from every European conflict. America had in her bosom a proportion of citizens of German origin, and appeared to a foreign observer rather as a cosmopolitan agglomeration than one homogeneous unit. But this wonderful country showed itself to be animated by one soul, permeating all parts of her immense organism and giving to all the individuals the same high ideal, the strongest bond of social unity, the ideal which the great doctor of the Catholic Church, St. Ambrose, defined in this brief and splendid motto: 'Above all, honesty.'

"America saw Belgium struggling and suffering for honor. America could not help esteeming, loving, admiring Belgium. She esteemed, loved, admired Belgium not in words but in deeds.

"On the 29th of June last the Belgian people, King Albert, Queen Elizabeth, and their royal children, in union with the whole hierarchy and clergy, celebrated in Brussels

After the Armistice

a National Thanksgiving day. A religious monument will commemorate for future generations our universal gratitude. A chapel of this, our national basilica, shall be dedicated to the great Republic of the United States.

“Accept, please, this resolution as the homage of our feelings of admiration and gratefulness toward your valiant troops who saved our liberty, and toward Herbert Hoover’s unparalleled Commission for Relief in Belgium, which saved the very lives of many of our Belgian families.

“Even as Belgium was, in 1914, the providential instrument to bar the way to the invaders, in order to allow France and England to concentrate their forces against the German colossus, so was America, in 1917, the main providential factor of our final victory.

“Our brotherhood in the worship of the same ideal brought our nations nearer to each other, and my desire to clasp your hand over the cause of eternal justice is my first reason for coming here.”

The Cardinal delivered his first address in English, and some of us who knew, only a few months before, of his difficulty in speaking that language, were surprised to hear him talking here as if he had had long practice in it. But it is entirely characteristic of the tireless mental activity of this great man, that he should, at sixty-eight, add mastery of another language to his accomplishments, and also that his exquisite courtesy should make it seem necessary to him to speak to us in our own tongue.

After this opening speech at Baltimore, despite the unavoidable fatigue of travel, and the relentlessly continuous chain of receptions, Cardinal Mercier talked during the succeeding weeks at greater length and with increasing eloquence. Those who have had the privilege of listening to him will not easily forget his portrayal of Belgium's suffering and her endurance, and her need of our continued coöperation, nor his wonderfully true and apposite analysis of the formation of American public opinion on the war. "The character-

After the Armistice

istic of your people," he said, "is their strong individuality, they do not want to be ruled or led this way or that until they see for themselves which way to go. And so it took time to mould the people into one mind. It was providential, because it was essential that America should come into the war absolutely united; if she had come in earlier this would not have been the case, and disaster might and probably would have resulted." When during one of his most strenuous speaking trips, he came suddenly upon the majestic wonder of Niagara Falls and was most deeply stirred by the sight, he turned swiftly to make a beautiful comparison between Niagara and America in the war. The immense sheet of smooth, quiet waters flowing down, with here and there a speck of foam, or eddy, indicating the underlying force and motion, represented to him America's apparent callousness or indifference at the beginning. Then he saw the waters gathering force and speed as they closed round the three sisters (England, France and

Belgium), becoming more and more agitated, and finally plunging forward with an irresistible impetus, carrying all before them.

He solemnly warned us, too, that though the German armies are defeated, Germany is not crushed. Her arms are laid down; but the Prussian spirit survives. And, finally, toward the close of his visit, to our great satisfaction—and here we overwhelmed him with applause—he talked more freely of his own single-handed battle with the enemy,—of his methods of attack and their logical victory.

What will be the ultimate effect of the expression by Jew and Gentile, Catholic and Protestant, of love and admiration for this illustrious Primate of the Catholic Church, on his thinking and practice? How much will it contribute toward that Christian unity which is still a hope and not an actuality in the world? Knowing what opportunity he holds in his hand, we do not like to remember—and indeed it is difficult to remember it as we speak with him—that this apostle of faith, so sorely

After the Armistice

needed, has almost reached his seventieth year.

The terrible days of the Occupation are now history. In and out of them, against all prevailing darkness, flashes the scarlet robe of the fighting Cardinal, as the man of God moved among his people to cheer them, and among the oppressors to defy and restrain them. Where help and comfort and encouragement were needed, he was there to speak in gentle tones the words that aided; where condemnation of brutality and wrong and protest and defiance needed utterance, his lips or pen never hesitated to utter them boldly. In the midst of the abominable deportations, he wrote to Governor General von Bissing: "This is no longer war; it is an attack on humanity." And near the close of the four years' conflict, he summed up the results of it all in a single sentence uttered to the German rulers of Belgium: "Right violated is still right; injustice supported by force is still injustice."

CHAPTER IX

TRENCHANT SAYINGS OF THE CARDINAL

The religion of Christ makes of patriotism a positive law; there is no perfect Christian who is not also a perfect patriot.

Let us not take bravado for courage, nor tumult for bravery.

Affliction is, in the hand of Divine Omnipotence, a two-edged sword. It wounds the rebellious, it sanctifies him who is willing to endure.

Occupied provinces are not conquered provinces.

Charity is union.

Certainly a powerful personality cannot reveal itself fully, without riding rough-shod over humdrum habits, without endangering even estimable claims of only secondary importance.

. . . . The bitter but comforting savor of self-denial.

Sayings of the Cardinal

The world grows old, but the Church ever renews her youth.

In the face of facts no presumption holds good.

Any far-reaching course of action demands some violence at the start; for humanity, as a whole, is not roused without a shock from its drowsiness or its dreams.

The certificate of our spiritual birth was dated and authentically signed, with blood and tears, on Calvary.

There is something more profoundly sad than political divisions and material disasters. It is the hatred, which injustice, real or supposed, stores up in so many hearts created to love one another.

Peace is defined to be security in order, order itself being the expression of justice.

Make a point of believing that others are better than you.

On the way to the desired end even legitimate pre-occupations are apt to be offended and some souls bound to be disturbed and suf-

fer. Those lesser human vexations are the reverse side in the triumph of any great cause.

The disposition to see good in others is the sign of a good heart.

No human institution resists the shock of revolutions or the wear and tear of time.

It is only too true that the nations are warring one against the other; all the souls are nevertheless of one family.

No, Grief is no mere word. Grief tears, undermines, penetrates, and sometimes kills. One must not deny it, but love it.

You must faithfully obey legitimate authority, because to resist such authority is to resist God.

In the tribunal of the world intention is judged by action.

Draw your plans, set up your batteries, arrange your movements, but still man will propose and God will dispose.

To hate is to make it one's object to do harm to others and to delight in so doing. Whatever may be our sufferings, we must not

Sayings of the Cardinal

wish to show hatred toward those who have inflicted them. Our national unity is joined with a feeling of universal brotherhood.

But even this feeling of universal brotherhood is dominated by our respect for unconditional justice, without which no relationship is possible, either between individuals or between nations.

We proclaim that public retribution is a virtue.

How can one love order without hating disorder?

Providence does not make a target of suffering, but a weapon wherewith to avenge outraged justice.

He who hears only one bell, hears only one sound.

It needs courage to throw oneself forward, but it needs no less to hold oneself back.

Let us all try to adopt the great principle of austerity in our lives.

Every historical period is a page in the divine book of Providence.

Keep your eyes fixed upon the polar star of your eternity.

And industrial, commercial, or financial enterprises, economic institutions, philanthropic, artistic, or literary associations — do not all of them succeed one another like gray clouds across the sky?

The bell is a sacred object; its function is sacred. It associates its prayer with all great memories, happy or unhappy, of our country.

True courage is not made of passionate impulse, but of self-restraint.

Christianity is essentially a death which leads to life.

It is not enough to do good; we must do good aright.

Always honor the poor! Give them the first place in your regard and in your care.

Is it surprising that the child lisping the first letters of the alphabet should not grasp the meaning of the great Book of History?

Virtue is identical with charity and consists in loving what we ought to love.

Sayings of the Cardinal

The key of history is the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

To die is the greatest and most beautiful act possible to men.

Pride and greed destroy the just balance of things; so that repression and armed defence are necessary for its restoration.

So long as the grain of corn dies not in the Earth, there can be no hope of life and fruitfulness.

As for you, Ladies, were you to make a show of abundance, at a time when your sisters have only clogs and threadbare garments, be sure that you would offend God, your country, and the dignity of the poor. Make the substance of your sacrifice out of your personal sufferings and your national sufferings, as well as out of the actions of your lives.

Death is not only a violent breaking-up of our existence, to which we are forced by our fate to submit. It is an act, also, to which the soul of the Christian must needs assent.

Exile is always exile.

We cannot exclude anyone,—not even our enemies,—from our prayers.

Beware of getting rich—that would be odious—at the expense of the poverty of others.

No peace is possible without order, and order rests upon justice and charity.

In civilized countries man has a right to liberty in the choice of his work. He has a right to his home. He has the right to reserve his services for his own country.

In good fortune it is easy to do without our neighbors; success makes one selfish. But in sorrow man feels the ground give way under his feet. He calls for help. God and his neighbor become necessary to him.

As to truth, it must stand above everything. Sincerity is the most essential of duties.

Faith should impregnate the whole life, the intercourse of individuals and the intercourse of Societies.

Eternity! My brethren, all of us lack courage to look it, even once, full in the face.

Sayings of the Cardinal

Philanthropy is not love.

We cannot, without cowardice, let a lie prevail.

Faith in Christ is the touch-stone of health.

Are political parties worth even the trouble of counting them? Have you ever known one of them to last for the space of a century?

Naturalism is the misunderstanding of the supernatural order.

Reason, without faith, is shortsighted; the will without grace, limps.

Man is not perfect, but he is perfectible.

Humility is justice,—that is, justice in the general acceptance of the word, as the accomplishment of moral order. Pride, on the contrary, is essentially disorder.

Faith seeks, intelligence finds.

The goal of the law of intelligence is the discovery of God.

The man who goes astray is always better than his principles.

We are not in the world to enjoy ourselves, but to learn how to die.

CHAPTER X

TEXT OF THE CHRISTMAS PASTORAL PATRIOTISM AND ENDURANCE

Christmas, 1914.

MY VERY DEAR BRETHREN,

I cannot tell you how instant and how present the thought of you has been to me throughout the months of suffering and of mourning through which we have passed. I had to leave you abruptly on the 20th of August in order to fulfil my last duty towards the beloved and venerated Pope whom we have lost, and in order to discharge an obligation of conscience from which I could not dispense myself, in the election of the successor of Pius the Tenth, the Pontiff who now directs the Church under the title, full of promise and of hope, of Benedict the Fifteenth.

It was in Rome itself that I received the tidings — stroke after stroke — of the partial de-

Patriotism and Endurance

struction of the Collegiate church of Louvain, next of the burning of the Library and of the scientific laboratories of our great University and of the devastation of the city, and next of the wholesale shooting of citizens, and tortures inflicted upon women and children, and upon unarmed and undefended men. And while I was still under the shock of these calamities the telegraph brought us news of the bombardment of our beautiful metropolitan church, of the church of Notre Dame au dela la Dyle, of the episcopal palace, and of a great part of our dear city of Malines.

Afar from my diocese, without means of communication with you, I was compelled to lock my grief within my own afflicted heart, and to carry it, with the thought of you, which never left me, to the foot of the Crucifix.

I craved courage and light, and sought them in such thoughts as these: A disaster has visited the world, and our beloved little Belgium, a nation so faithful in the great mass of her population to God, so upright in her

patriotism, so noble in her King and Government, is the first sufferer. She bleeds; her sons are stricken down within her fortresses and upon her fields in defense of her rights and of her territory. Soon there will not be one Belgian family not in mourning. Why all this sorrow, my God? Lord, Lord, hast Thou forsaken us? Then I looked upon the Crucifix. I looked upon Jesus, most gentle and humble Lamb of God, crushed, clothed in His blood as in a garment, and I thought I heard from His own mouth the words which the Psalmist uttered in His name: "O God, my God, look upon me; why hast Thou forsaken me? O my God, I shall cry, and Thou wilt not hear." And forthwith the murmur died upon my lips; and I remembered what Our Divine Saviour said in His gospel: "The disciple is not above the master, nor the servant above his lord." The Christian is the servant of a God who became man in order to suffer and to die. To rebel against pain, to revolt against Providence, because it permits grief and bereave-

Patriotism and Endurance

ment, is to forget whence we came, the school in which we have been taught, the example that each of us carries graven in the name of a Christian, which each of us honors at his hearth, contemplates at the altar of his prayers, and of which he desires that his tomb, the place of his last sleep, shall bear the sign.

My dearest Brethren, I shall return by and by to the providential law of suffering, but you will agree that since it has pleased a God made man, who was holy, innocent, without stain, to suffer and to die for us who are sinners, who are guilty, who are perhaps criminals, it ill becomes us to complain whatever we may be called upon to endure. The truth is that no disaster on earth, striking creatures only, is comparable with that which our sins provoked, and whereof God Himself chose to be the blameless victim.

Having recalled to mind this fundamental truth, I find it easier to summon you to face what has befallen us, and to speak to you sim-

ply and directly of what is your duty, and of what may be your hope. That duty I shall express in two words: Patriotism and Endurance.

PATRIOTISM

My dearest Brethren, I desire to utter, in your name and my own, the gratitude of those whose age, vocation, and social conditions cause them to benefit by the heroism of others, without bearing in it any active part.

When, immediately on my return from Rome, I went to Havre to greet our Belgian, French and English wounded; when, later at Malines, at Louvain, at Antwerp, it was given to me to take the hands of those brave men who carried a bullet in their flesh, a wound on their forehead, because they had marched to the attack of the enemy, or borne the shock of his onslaught, it was a word of gratitude to them that rose to my lips. "O valiant friends," I said, "it was for us, it was for each one of us, it was for me, that you risked your lives and are now in pain. I am moved to tell you of

Patriotism and Endurance

my respect, of my thankfulness, to assure you that the whole nation knows how much she is in debt to you."

For in truth our soldiers are our saviours.

A first time, at Liège, they saved France; a second time, in Flanders, they arrested the advance of the enemy upon Calais. France and England know it; and Belgium stands before them both, and before the entire world, as a nation of heroes. Never before in my whole life did I feel so proud to be a Belgian as when, on the platforms of French stations, and halting a while in Paris, and visiting London, I was witness of the enthusiastic admiration our allies feel for the heroism of our army. Our King is, in the esteem of all, at the very summit of the moral scale; he is doubtless the only man who does not recognize that fact, as simple as the simplest of his soldiers, he stands in the trenches and puts new courage, by the serenity of his face, into the hearts of those of whom he requires that they shall not doubt their country. The foremost duty of every

Belgian citizen at this hour is gratitude to the army.

If any man had rescued you from shipwreck or from a fire, you would assuredly hold yourselves bound to him by a debt of everlasting thankfulness. But it is not one man, it is two hundred and fifty thousand men who fought, who suffered, who fell for you so that you might be free, so that Belgium might keep her independence, her dynasty, her patriotic unity; so that after the vicissitudes of battle, she might rise nobler, purer, more erect, and more glorious than before.

Pray daily, my Brethren, for these two hundred and fifty thousand, and for their leaders to victory; pray for our brothers in arms; pray for the fallen; pray for those who are still engaged; pray for the recruits who are making ready for the fight to come.

In your name I send them the greeting of our fraternal sympathy and our assurance that not only do we pray for the success of their arms and for the eternal welfare of their souls,

Patriotism and Endurance

but that we also accept for their sake all the distress, whether physical or moral, that falls to our own share in the oppression that hourly besets us, and all that the future may have in store for us, in humiliation for a time, in anxiety, and in sorrow. In the day of final victory we shall all be in honor; it is just that to-day we should all be in grief.

To judge by certain rumors that have reached me, from districts that have had least to suffer, some bitter words have arisen towards our God, words which, if spoken with cold calculation, would be not far from blasphemous.

Oh, all too easily do I understand how natural instinct rebels against the evils that have fallen upon Catholic Belgium; the spontaneous thought of mankind is ever that virtue should have its instantaneous crown, and injustice its immediate retribution. But the ways of God are not our ways, the Scripture tells us. Providence gives free course, for a time measured by Divine wisdom, to human passions and the conflict of desires. God, be-

ing eternal, is patient. The last word is the word of mercy, and it belongs to those who believe in love. "Why art thou sad, O my soul? and why dost thou disquiet me? *Quare tristis es anima mea, et quare conturbas me?* Hope in God. Bless Him always; is He not thy Saviour and thy God? *Spera in Deo quoniam adhuc confitebor illi, salutare vultus mei et Deus meus.*"

When holy Job, whom God presented as an example of constancy to the generations to come, had been stricken, blow upon blow, by Satan, with the loss of his children, of his goods, of his health, his enemies approached him with provocations to discouragement; his wife urged upon him a blasphemy and a curse. "Dost thou still continue in thy simplicity? Curse God, and die." But the man of God was unshaken in his confidence, "And he said to her: Thou hast spoken like one of the foolish women: if we have received good things at the hand of God, why should we not receive evil? The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away.

Patriotism and Endurance

As it hath pleased the Lord so is it done. Blessed be the name of the Lord. *Dominus dedit, Dominus abstulit; sicut Domino placuit ita factum est. Sit nomen Domini benedictum.*” And experience proved that saintly one to be right. It pleased the Lord to recompense, even here below, His faithful servant. “The Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. And for his sake God pardoned his friends.”

Better than any other man, perhaps, do I know what our unhappy country has undergone. Nor will any Belgian, I trust, doubt of what I suffer in my soul, as citizen and as a Bishop, in sympathy with all this sorrow. These last four months have seemed to me age-long. By thousands have our brave ones been mown down; wives, mothers, are weeping for those they shall not see again; hearths are desolate; dire poverty spreads, anguish increases. At Malines, at Antwerp, the people of two great cities have been given over, the one for six hours, the other for thirty-four hours, to

a continuous bombardment, to the throes of death. I have traversed the greater part of the districts most terribly devastated in my diocese; and the ruins I beheld, and the ashes, were more dreadful than I, prepared by the saddest of forebodings, could have imagined. Other parts of my diocese, which I have not yet had time to visit, have in like manner been laid waste. Churches, schools, asylums, hospitals, convents in great numbers, are in ruins. Entire villages have all but disappeared. At Werchter-Wackerzeel, for instance, out of three hundred and eighty homes, a hundred and thirty remain; at Tremeloo two-thirds of the village are overthrown; at Bucken out of a hundred houses twenty are standing; at Schaffen one hundred and eighty-nine houses out of two hundred are destroyed — eleven still stand. At Louvain the third part of the buildings are down; one thousand and seventy-four dwellings have disappeared; on the town land and in the suburbs, one thousand eight hundred and twenty-three houses have been burnt.

Patriotism and Endurance

In this dear city of Louvain, perpetually in my thoughts, the magnificent church of St. Peter will never recover its former splendor. The ancient college of St. Ives, the art-schools, the consular and commercial schools of the University, the old markets, our rich library with its collections, its unique and unpublished manuscripts, its archives, its gallery of great portraits of illustrious rectors, chancellors, professors, dating from the time of its foundation, which preserved for masters and students alike a noble tradition and were an incitement in their studies — all this accumulation of intellectual, of historic, and of artistic riches, the fruit of labors of five centuries — all is reduced to dust.

Many a parish lost its pastor. There is now sounding in my ears the sorrowful voice of an old man of whom I asked whether he had had Mass on Sunday in his battered church. "It is two months," he said, "since we had a church." The parish priest and the curate had been interned in a concentration camp.

Thousands of Belgian citizens have in like manner been deported to the prisons of Germany, to Munsterlagen, to Celle, to Magdeburg. At Munsterlagen alone three thousand one hundred civil prisoners were numbered. History will tell of the physical and moral torments of their long martyrdom. Hundreds of innocent men were shot. I possess no complete necrology; but I know that there were ninety-one shot at Aerschot, and that there, under pain of death, their fellow citizens were compelled to dig their graves. In the Louvain group of communes one hundred and seventy-six persons, men and women, old men and sucklings, rich and poor, in health and sickness, were shot or burnt.

In my diocese alone I know that thirteen priests or men in orders were put to death. One of these, the parish priest of Gelrode, suffered, I believe, a veritable martyrdom. I made a pilgrimage to his grave, and, amid the little flock which so lately he had been feeding with the zeal of an apostle, there did I pray to him that

Patriotism and Endurance

from the height of Heaven he would guard his parish, his diocese, his country.

We can neither number our dead nor compute the measure of our ruins. And what would it be if we turned our sad steps towards Liège, Namur, Andenne, Dinant, Tamines, Charleroi, and elsewhere?

And where lives were not taken, and where buildings were not thrown down, what anguish unrevealed! Families, hitherto living at ease, now in bitter want; all commerce at an end, all careers ruined; industry at a standstill; thousands upon thousands of working-men without employment; working-women, shop-girls, humble servant-girls without the means of earning their bread; and poor souls forlorn on the bed of sickness and fever, crying, "O Lord, how long, how long, how long?"

There is nothing to reply. The reply remains the secret of God.

Yes, dearest Brethren, it is the secret of God. He is the master of events and the sovereign director of the human race. "The

earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof: the world and all they that dwell therein. *Domini est terra et plenitudo ejus; orbis terrarum et universi qui habitant in eo.*" The first relation between the creature and his Creator is that of absolute dependence. The very being of the creature is dependent; dependent are his nature, his faculties, his acts, his works. At every passing moment that dependence is renewed, is incessantly reasserted, inasmuch as, without the will of the Almighty, existence of the first single instant would vanish before the next. Adoration, which is the recognition of the sovereignty of God, is not, therefore, a fugitive act, it is the permanent state of a being conscious of his own origin. On every page of the Scriptures Jehovah affirms His sovereign dominion. The whole economy of the Old Law, the whole history of the Chosen People, tend to the same end—to maintain Jehovah upon His throne and to cast idols down. I am the first and the last. "I am the Lord, and there is none else; there is no God

Patriotism and Endurance

beside me. I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create evil. Woe to him that gainsayeth his maker, a sherd of the earthen pots. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What art thou making, and thy work is without hands? Tell ye, and come, and consult together. A just God and a saviour, there is none beside me."

Ah, did the proud reason of mankind dream that it could dismiss our God? Did it smile in irony when, through Christ and through His Church, He pronounced the solemn words of expiation and of repentance? Vain of fugitive successes, O light-minded man, full of pleasure and of wealth, hast thou imagined that thou couldst suffice even to thyself? Then was God set aside in oblivion, then was He misunderstood, then was He blasphemed, with acclamation, and by those whose authority, whose influence, whose power had charged them with the duty of causing His great laws and His great order to be reversed and obeyed. Anarchy then spread among the lower ranks of

mankind, and many sincere consciences were troubled by the evil example. How long, O Lord, they wondered, how long wilt Thou suffer the pride of this iniquity? Or wilt Thou finally justify the impious opinion that Thou carest no more for the work of Thy hands? A shock from a thunderbolt, and behold all human foresight is set at naught. Europe trembles upon the brink of destruction.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

Many are the thoughts that throng the breast of men to-day, and the chief of them all is this: God reveals Himself as the Master. The nations that made the attack, and the nations that are warring in self-defence, alike confess themselves to be in the hands of Him without whom nothing is made, nothing is done. Men long unaccustomed to prayer are turning again to God. Within the army, within the civil world, in public, and within the individual conscience, there is prayer. Nor is that prayer to-day a word learnt by rote, uttered lightly

Patriotism and Endurance

by the lip; it surges from the troubled heart, it takes the form, at the feet of God, of the very sacrifice of life. The being of man is a whole offering to God. This is worship, this is the fulfillment of the primal moral and religious law: the Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve. And even those who murmur, and whose courage is not sufficient for submission to the hand that smites us and saves us, even these implicitly acknowledge God to be the Master, for if they blaspheme Him, they blaspheme Him for His delay in closing with their desires.

But as for us, my Brethren, we will adore Him in the integrity of our souls. Not yet do we see, in all its magnificence, the revelation of His wisdom, but our faith trusts Him with it all. Before His justice we are humble, and in His mercy hopeful. With holy Tobias we know that because we have sinned, He has chastised us, but because He is merciful He will save us.

It would perhaps be cruel to dwell upon our

guilt now, when we are paying so well and so nobly what we owe. But shall we not confess that we have indeed something to expiate? He who has received much, from him shall much be required. Now, dare we say that the moral and religious standard of our people has risen as its economic prosperity has risen? The observance of Sunday rest, the Sunday Mass, the reverence for marriage, the restraints of modesty — what had you made of these? What, even within Christian families, had become of the simplicity practised by our fathers, what of the spirit of penance, what of respect for authority? And we too, we priests, we religious ones, I, the Bishop, we whose great mission it is to present in our lives, yet more than in our speech, the Gospel of Christ, have we earned the right to speak to our people the word spoken by the apostle to the nations, “Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ?” We labor indeed, we pray indeed, but it is all too little. We should be, by the very duty of our state, the public expiators for the sins of

Patriotism and Endurance

the world. But which was the thing dominant in our lives—expiation, or our comfort and well-being as citizens? Alas, we have all had times in which we too fell under God's reproach to His people after the escape from Egypt: "The beloved grew fat and wicked, they have provoked me with that which was no god, and I will provoke them with that which is no people." Nevertheless, He will save us; for He wills not that our adversaries should boast that they, and not the Eternal, did these things. "See ye that I alone am, and there is no other God beside me. I will kill and I will make to live, I will strike and I will heal."

God will save Belgium, my brethren, you cannot doubt it.

Nay rather, He is saving her.

Across the smoke of conflagration, across the stream of blood, have you not glimpses, do you not perceive signs, of His love for us? Is there a patriot among us who does not know that Belgium has grown great? Nay, which

of us would have the heart to cancel this last page of our national history? Which of us does not exult in the brightness of the glory of this shattered nation? When in her throes she brings forth heroes, our Mother Country gives her own energy to the blood of those sons of hers. Let us acknowledge that we needed a lesson in patriotism. There were Belgians, and many such, who wasted their time and their talents in futile quarrels of class with class, of race with race, of passion with personal passion.

Yet when, on the second of August, a mighty foreign power, confident in its own strength and defiant of the faith of treaties, dared to threaten us in our independence, then did all Belgians, without difference of party, or of condition, or of origin, rise up as one man, close-ranged about their own king, and their own government, and cry to the invader: "Thou shalt not go through!"

At once, instantly, we were conscious of our own patriotism. For down within us all is

Patriotism and Endurance

something deeper than personal interests, than personal kinships, than party feeling, and this is the need and the will to devote ourselves to that more general interest which Rome termed the public thing, *Res publica*. And this profound will within us is Patriotism.

Our country is not a mere concourse of persons or of families dwelling on the same soil, having amongst themselves relations, more or less intimate, of business, of neighborhood, of a community of memories, happy or unhappy. Not so; it is an association of living souls subject to a social organization to be defended and safeguarded at all costs, even the cost of blood, under the leadership of those presiding over its fortunes. And it is because of this general spirit that the people of a country live a common life in the present, through the past, through the aspirations, the hopes, the confidence in a life to come, which they share together. Patriotism, an internal principle of order and of unity, an organic bond of the members of a nation was placed by the

finest thinkers of Greece and Rome at the head of the natural virtues. Aristotle, the prince of the philosophers of Antiquity, held disinterested service of the City—that is, the State—to be the very ideal of human duty. And the religion of Christ makes of patriotism a positive law; there is no perfect Christian who is not also a perfect patriot. For our religion exalts the pagan ideal, showing it to be realizable only in the Absolute. Whence, in truth, comes this universal, this irresistible impulse which carries at once the will of the whole nation in one single effort of cohesion and of resistance in face of the hostile menace against her unity and her freedom? Whence comes it that in an hour all interests were merged in the interest of all, and that all lives were together offered in willing immolation? Not that the State is worth more, essentially, than the individual or the family, seeing that the good of the family and of the individual is the cause and reason of the organization of the State. Not that our country is a Moloch on

Patriotism and Endurance

whose altar lives may lawfully be sacrificed. The rigidity of pagan morals and the despotism of the Caesars suggested the false principle — and modern militarism tends to revive it — that the State is omnipotent, and that the discretionary power of the State is the rule of Right. Not so, replies Christian theology, Right is Peace, that is, the interior order of a nation, founded upon Justice. And Justice itself is absolute only because it formulates the essential relation of man with God and of man with man. Moreover, war for the sake of war is a crime. War is justifiable only if it is the necessary means for securing peace. St. Augustine has said: "Peace must not be a preparation for war. And war is not to be made except for the attainment of peace." In the light of this teaching, which is repeated by St. Thomas Aquinas, Patriotism is seen in its religious character. Family interests, class interests, party interests, and the material good of the individual take their place, in the scale of values, below the ideal of Patriotism, for

that ideal is Right, which is absolute. Furthermore, that ideal is the public recognition of Right in national matters, and of national Honor. Now there is no Absolute except God. God alone, by His sanctity and His sovereignty, dominates all human interests and human wills. And to affirm the absolute necessity of the subordination of all things to Right, to Justice, and to Truth, is implicitly to affirm God.

When, therefore, humble soldiers whose heroism we praise answer us with characteristic simplicity, "We only did our duty," or "We were bound in honor," they express the religious character of their Patriotism. Which of us does not feel that Patriotism is a sacred thing, and that a violation of national dignity is in a manner a profanation and a sacrilege.

I was asked lately by a Staff officer whether a soldier falling in a righteous cause — and our cause is such, to demonstration — is not veritably a martyr. Well, he is not a martyr in the rigorous theological meaning of the word, inas-

Patriotism and Endurance

much as he dies in arms, whereas the martyr delivers himself, undefended and unarmed, into the hands of the executioner. But if I am asked what I think of the eternal salvation of a brave man who has consciously given his life in defence of his country's honor, and in vindication of violated justice, I shall not hesitate to reply that without any doubt whatever Christ crowns his military valour, and that death, accepted in this Christian spirit, assures the safety of that man's soul.

“Greater love than this no man hath,” said Our Saviour, “than a man lay down his life for his friends.” And the soldier who dies to save his brothers, and to defend the hearths and altars of his country, reaches this highest of all degrees of charity. He may not have made a close analysis of the value of his sacrifice; but must we suppose that God requires of the plain soldier in the excitement of battle the methodical precision of the moralist or the theologian? Can we who revere his heroism doubt that his God welcomes him with love?

Christian mothers, be proud of your sons. Of all griefs, of all our human sorrows, yours is perhaps the most worthy of veneration. I think I behold you in your affliction, but erect, standing at the side of the Mother of Sorrows, at the foot of the Cross. Suffer us to offer you not only our condolence but our congratulation. Not all our heroes obtain temporal honors, but for all we expect the immortal crown of the elect. For this is the virtue of a single act of perfect charity: it cancels a whole lifetime of sins. It transforms a sinful man into a saint.

Assuredly a great and a Christian comfort is the thought that not only amongst our own men, but in any belligerent army whatsoever, all who in good faith submit to the discipline of their leaders in the service of a cause they believe to be righteous, are sharers in the eternal reward of the soldier's sacrifice. And how many may there not be among these young men of twenty who, had they survived, might possibly not have had the resolution to live

Patriotism and Endurance

altogether well, and yet in the impulse of patriotism had the resolution to die so well?

Is it not true, my Brethren, that God has the supreme art of mingling His mercy with His wisdom and His justice? And shall we not acknowledge that if war is a scourge for this earthly life of ours, a scourge whereof we cannot easily estimate the destructive force and the extent, it is also for multitudes of souls an expiation, a purification, a force to lift them to the pure love of their country and to perfect Christian unselfishness?

ENDURANCE

We may now say, my Brethren, without unworthy pride, that our little Belgium has taken a foremost place in the esteem of nations. I am aware that certain onlookers, notably in Italy and in Holland, have asked how it could be necessary to expose this country to so immense a loss of wealth and of life, and whether a verbal manifesto against hostile aggression, or a single cannon-shot on the frontier, would

not have served the purpose of protest. But assuredly all men of good feeling will be with us in our rejection of these paltry counsels. Mere utilitarianism is no sufficient rule of Christian citizenship.

On the 19th of April, 1839, a treaty was signed in London by Leopold, in the name of Belgium, on the one part, and by the Emperor of Austria, the King of France, the Queen of England, the King of Prussia and the Emperor of Russia on the other; and its seventh article decreed that Belgium should form a separate and perpetually neutral State, and should be held to the observance of this neutrality in regard to all other States. The co-signatories promised, for themselves and their successors, upon their oaths, to fulfil and to observe that treaty in every point and every article without contravention, or tolerance of contravention. Belgium was thus bound in honor to defend her own independence. She kept her oath. The other Powers were bound to respect and also to protect her neutrality.

Patriotism and Endurance

Germany violated her oath; England kept hers.

These are the facts.

The laws of conscience are sovereign laws. We should have acted unworthily had we evaded our obligation by a mere feint of resistance. And now we would not rescind our first resolution; we exult in it. Being called upon to write a most solemn page in the history of our country, we resolve that it shall also be sincere, and glorious. As long as we are required to give proof of endurance, so long we shall endure.

All classes of our citizens have devoted their sons to the cause of their country; but the poorer part of the population have set the noblest example, for they have suffered also privation, cold, and famine. If I may judge of the general feeling from what I have witnessed in the humbler quarters of Malines, and in the most cruelly afflicted districts of my diocese, the people are energetic in their endurance. They look to be righted; they will not hear of surrender.

Affliction is, in the hand of Divine Omnipotence, a two-edged sword. It wounds the rebellious, it sanctifies him who is willing to endure.

God proveth us, as St. James has told us, but He "is not a tempter of evils." All that comes from Him is good, a ray of light, a pledge of love. "But every man is tempted by his own concupiscence. . . . Blessed is he that endureth temptation, for when he hath been proved he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love Him."

A truce, then, my Brethren, to all murmurs of complaint. Remember St. Paul's words to the Hebrews, and through them to all of Christ's flock, when, referring to the bloody sacrifice of Our Lord upon the cross he reminded them that they had yet resisted unto blood. Not only to the Redeemer's example shall you look but also to that of the thirty thousand, perhaps forty thousand, men who have already shed their life-blood for their

Patriotism and Endurance

country. In comparison with them what have you endured who are deprived of the daily comforts of your lives, your newspapers, your means of travel, communication with your families? Let the patriotism of our army, the heroism of our King, of our beloved Queen in her magnanimity, serve to stimulate us and support us. Let us bemoan ourselves no more. Let us deserve the coming deliverance. Let us hasten it by our virtue even more than by our prayers. Courage, Brethren. Suffering passes away; the crown of life for our souls, the crown of glory for our nation, shall not pass.

I do not require of you to renounce any of your national desires. On the contrary, I hold it as part of the obligations of my episcopal office to instruct you as to your duty in face of the Power that has invaded our soil and now occupies the greater part of our country. The authority of that Power is no lawful authority. Therefore, in soul and conscience you owe it neither respect, nor attachment, nor obedience.

The sole lawful authority in Belgium is that of our King, of our Government, of the elected representatives of the nation. This authority alone has a right to our affection, our submission.

Thus, the invader's acts of public administration have in themselves no authority, but legitimate authority has tacitly ratified such of those acts as affect the general interest, and this ratification, and this only, gives them juridic value.

Occupied provinces are not conquered provinces. Belgium is no more a German province than Galicia is a Russian province. Nevertheless the occupied portion of our country is in a position it is compelled to endure. The greater part of our towns, having surrendered to the enemy on conditions, are bound to observe those conditions. From the outset of military operations the civil authorities of the country urged upon all private persons the necessity of abstention from hostile acts against the enemy's army. That instruction

Patriotism and Endurance

remains in force. It is our army, and our army solely, in league with the valiant troops of our Allies that has the honor and the duty of national defence. Let us entrust the army with our final deliverance.

Towards the persons of those who are holding dominion among us by military force, and who assuredly cannot but be sensible of the chivalrous energy with which we have defended, and are still defending, our independence, let us conduct ourselves with all needful forbearance. Some among them have declared themselves willing to mitigate, as far as possible, the severity of our situation and to help us to recover some minimum of regular civic life. Let us observe the rules they have laid upon us so long as those rules do not violate our personal liberty, nor our consciences as Christians, nor our duty to our country. Let us not take bravado for courage, nor tumult for bravery.

You especially, my dearest Brethren in the Priesthood, be you at once the best examples

of Patriotism and the best supporters of public order. On the field of battle you have been magnificent. The King and the Army admire the intrepidity of our military chaplains in face of death, their charity at the work of the ambulance. Your Bishops are proud of you.

You have suffered greatly. You have endured much calumny. But be patient; history will do you justice. I to-day bear my witness for you.

Wherever it has been possible I have questioned our people, our clergy, and particularly a considerable number of priests who had been deported to German prisons, but whom a principle of humanity, to which I gladly render homage, has since set at liberty. Well, I affirm upon my honor, and I am prepared to assert upon faith of my oath, that until now I have not met a single ecclesiastic, secular or regular, who had once incited civilians to bear arms against the enemy. All have loyally followed the instructions of their Bishops, given in the early days of August, to the effect that they

Patriotism and Endurance

were to use their moral influence over the civil population so that order might be preserved and military regulations observed.

I exhort you to persevere in this ministry of peace, which is for you the sanest form of Patriotism; to accept with all your hearts the privations you have to endure; to simplify still further, if it is possible, your way of life. One of you who is reduced by robbery and pillage to a state bordering on total destitution, said to me lately, "I am living now as I wish I had lived always."

Multiply the efforts of your charity, corporal and spiritual. Like the great Apostle, do you endure daily the cares of your Church, so that no man shall suffer loss and you not suffer loss, and no man fall and you not burn with zeal for him. Make yourselves the champions of all those virtues enjoined upon you by civic honor as well as by the Gospel of Christ. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever modest, whatsoever just, whatsoever holy, whatsoever lovely, whatsoever of good

fame, if there be any virtue, if any praise of discipline, think on these things." So may the worthiness of our lives justify us, my most dear Colleagues, in repeating the noble claim of St. Paul: "The things which ye have learned, and received, and heard, and seen, in me, these do ye, and the God of peace shall be with you."

CONCLUSION

Let us continue then, dearest Brethren, to pray, to do penance, to attend Holy Mass, and to receive Holy Communion for the sacred intention of our dear country. . . . I recommend parish priests to hold a funeral service on behalf of our fallen soldiers, on every Saturday.

Money, I know well, is scarce with you all. Nevertheless, if you have little, give of that little, for the succour of those among your fellow countrymen who are without shelter, without fuel, without sufficient bread. I have directed my parish priests to form for this purpose, in every parish, a relief committee.

Patriotism and Endurance

Do you second them charitably and convey to my hands such alms as you can save from your superfluity, if not from your necessities, so that I may be the distributor to the destitute who are known to me.

Our distress has moved the other nations. England, Ireland, and Scotland; France, Holland, the United States, Canada, have vied with each other in generosity for our relief. It is a spectacle at once most mournful and most noble. Here again is a revelation of the Providential Wisdom which draws good from evil. In your name, my Brethren, and in my own, I offer to the governments and the nations that have succoured us the assurance of our admiration and our gratitude.

With a touching goodness our Holy Father Benedict the Fifteenth has been the first to incline his heart towards us. When, a few moments after his election, he deigned to take me into his arms, I was bold enough there to ask that the first Pontifical Benediction he spoke should be given to Belgium, already

in deep distress through the war. He eagerly closed with my wish, which I knew would also be yours. To-day, with delicate kindness, His Holiness has decided to renounce the annual offering of Peter's Pence from Belgium. In a letter dated on the beautiful festival of the Immaculate Virgin, December the Eighth, he assures us of the part he bears in our sufferings, he prays for us, calls down upon our Belgium the protection of Heaven, and exhorts us to hail in the then approaching advent of the Prince of Peace the dawn of better days. Here is the text of this valued message:

“To our dear Son, Désiré Mercier, Cardinal Priest of the Holy Roman Church, of the title of St. Peter in Chains, Archbishop of Malines, at Malines.

“*Our Dear Son,*

HEALTH AND APOSTOLIC BENEDICTION

“The fatherly solicitude which we feel for all the faithful whom Divine Providence has entrusted to our care, causes us to share their griefs even more fully than their joys.

“Could we then fail to be moved by keenest sorrow at the sight of the Belgian nation which we so dearly love,

Patriotism and Endurance

reduced by a most cruel and most disastrous war to this lamentable state?

“We behold the King and his august family, the members of the government, the chief persons of the country, bishops, priests, and a whole people enduring woes which must fill with pity all gentle hearts, and which our own soul, in the fervour of paternal love, must be the first to compassionate. Thus, under the burden of this distress and this mourning, we call, in our prayers, for an end to such misfortunes. May the God of mercy hasten the day! Meanwhile we strive to mitigate, as far as in us lies, this excessive suffering. Therefore, the step taken by our dear Son, Cardinal Hartmann, Archbishop of Cologne, at whose request it was arranged that French or Belgian priests detained in Germany should have the treatment of officers, gave us great satisfaction, and we have expressed our thanks to him for his action.

“As regards Belgium, we have been informed that the faithful of that nation, so sorely tried, did not neglect, in their piety, to turn towards us their thoughts, and that even under the blow of so many calamities they proposed to gather this year, as in all preceding years, the offerings to St. Peter, which supply the necessities of the Apostolic See. This truly incomparable proof of piety and of attachment filled us with admiration; we accept it with all the affection that is due from a grateful heart: but having regard to the painful position in which our dear children are placed, we cannot bring ourselves to favour the fulfilment of that project, noble though it is. If any alms are to be gathered, our wish is that the money should be entirely devoted to the

Mercier

Benefit of the Belgian people, who are as illustrious by reason of their nobility and their piety as they are to-day worthy of all sympathy.

"Amid the difficulties and anxieties of the present hour we would remind the sons who are so dear to us that the arm of God is not shortened, that He is ever able to save, that His ear is not deaf to prayer.

"Let the hope of Divine aid increase with the approach of the festival of Christmas and of the mysteries that celebrate the Birth of Our Lord, and recall that peace which God proclaimed to mankind by His angels.

"May the souls of the suffering and afflicted find comfort and consolation in the assurance of the paternal tenderness that prompts our prayers. Yes, may God take pity upon the Belgian people, and grant them the abundance of all good.

"As a pledge of these prayers and good wishes, we now grant to all, and in the first place to you, our dear Son, the Apostolic Benediction.

"Given in Rome, by St. Peter's, on the feast of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady, in the year MCMXIV, the first of our Pontificate.

"BENEDICT XV, Pope."

One last word, my dearest Brethren. At the outset of these troubles I said to you that in the day of the liberation of our territory we should give to the Sacred Heart and to the Blessed Virgin a public testimony of our grati-

Patriotism and Endurance

tude. Since that date I have been able to consult my colleagues in the Episcopate, and in agreement with them, I now ask you to make, as soon as possible, a fresh effort to hasten the construction of the national basilica, promised by Belgium in honor of the Sacred Heart. As soon as the sun of peace shall shine upon our country, we shall redress our ruins, we shall restore shelter to those who have none, we shall rebuild our churches, we shall reconstitute our libraries, and we shall hope to crown this work of reconciliation by raising, upon the heights of the capital of Belgium, free and Catholic, that national basilica of the Sacred Heart. Furthermore, every year we shall make it our duty to celebrate solemnly, on the Friday following Corpus Christi, the festival of the Sacred Heart.

Lastly, in every region of the diocese the clergy will organize an annual pilgrimage of thanksgiving to one of the privileged sanctuaries of the Blessed Virgin, in order to pay especial honour to the Protectress of our na-

tional independence and universal Mediatrix of the Christian commonwealth.

The present letter shall be read on the following dates — on the first day of the year and on the Sundays following the day on which it shall severally reach you.

Accept, my dearest Brethren, my wishes and prayers for you, and for the happiness of your families, and receive, I pray you, my paternal benediction.

D. J. Card. MERCIER,
Archbishop of Malines.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

CARDINAL MERCIER'S WORKS

Works of Philosophy, Psychology, and Metaphysics

La Parole, 1888.

Rapport sur les Études Supérieures de Philosophie, 1892.

Cours de Philosophie, 1892.

Les Origines de la Psychologie Contemporaine, 1897 (Trans. by W. H. Mitchell, 1918).

Psychologie Expérimentale et la Philosophie Spiritualiste, 1900.

Critériologie Générale, 1900.

The Relation of Experimental Psychology to Philosophy, 1902.

Metaphysique Générale, 1910.

Modernism (Trans. by Marian Lindsay, 1910).

Manual of Modern Scholastic Philosophy (Trans. by Parker, 1917).

Bibliography

*Special Letters and Addresses published by L'Action
Catholique (Brussels)*

A Mes Séminaristes (16th thousand).

Retraite Pastorale (5th thousand).

Oeuvres Pastorales, Actes.

Allocutions, Letters (2d ed.)

Vol. I. From 1906 to 1918.

II. From 1908 to 1910.

III. From 1910 to 1913.

IV. From March, 1913, to July, 1914.

V. In press.

La Vie Intérieure—Retraite Prêchée à ses Prêtres, 1918.

La Correspondence de S. E. le Cardinal Mercier avec le
Gouvernement Allemand pendant l'Occupation (1914-1918);
published by Albert Dewit, Brussels, 1919.

A complete and authoritative edition of the war-time pastoral
letters is in preparation by M. Dessain, Malines.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

Los Angeles

This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

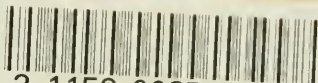
ED
REC'D
JUL X2 1983

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



AA 001 258 737 4

5



3 1158 00870 8645

